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THE AWARD WINNING GAMES MAGAZINE

FROM THE ARCHIVES
INCENTIVE SOFTWARE
HOW DRILLER HELPED THE 8-BIT DEVELOPER MAKE THE LEAP TO 3D





THE COLLECTOR'S GUIDE TO
N64
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THE MAKING OF
JET SET WILLY II
DISCOVER HOW AN AMSTRAD PORT BECAME A HIT SEQUEL

THE HISTORY OF
SHADOW OF THE BEAST
MARTIN EDMONDSON LOOKS BACK AT THE CULT AMIGA FRANCHISE

FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE OF RETRO GAMER

DUKE NUKEM
SCOTT MILLER AND RANDY PITCHFORD ON THE DUKE'S PAST AND FUTURE

AL LOWE
LEISURE SUIT LARRY'S CREATOR DISCUSSES 30 YEARS IN GAMING

ASTRO BOY
HOW TREASURE TURNED A CULT MANGA INTO A HARDCORE BLASTER

THE UNCONVERTED
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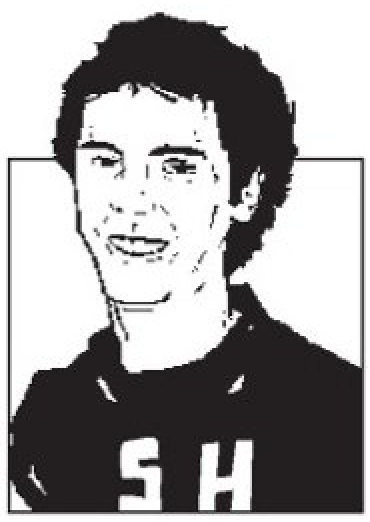
THE RETROBATES

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE N64 GAME?



DARRAN JONES

Easy – *Sin & Punishment*. When I was on **games™** I took it into work. People couldn't believe something that spectacular was on an N64.
Expertise:
Steering the helm of an award-winning magazine
Currently playing:
Mass Effect 2
Favourite game of all time:
Strider



STUART HUNT

I actually have two: the underrated *Body Harvest* and the excellent *Blast Corps*. Obviously *Mario 64* too – but that kind of goes without saying, really.
Expertise:
Games with flying bits in them
Currently playing:
World of Goo
Favourite game of all time:
Vanquish



JASON KELK

Top Gear Rally... I spent far too much time playing that when it came out!
Expertise:
Prodding other people's code
Currently playing:
Universe, Space and Life (C64)
Favourite game of all time:
Io



CRAIG GRANNELL

For sheer exhilaration, the buckets of fun it offers, and the fact that I was actually quite good at it, I have to go for *F-Zero X*.
Expertise:
Games you don't need 37 fingers to control
Currently playing:
Real Racing 2
Favourite game of all time:
H.E.R.O.



ASHLEY DAY

Star Fox 64 (NEVER call it *Lylat Wars*!) isn't just the best game on N64; it's one of the greatest games ever. It's a masterclass in interactive storytelling, that the whole industry seemed to ignore, and it's a bloody good shooter too. I can't wait for the 3DS port.
Currently playing:
Dead Space 2
Favourite game of all time:
Shining Force III



PAUL DRURY

Ocarina Of Time. The first *Zelda* game I played and, as a latecomer to the series, I found everything about it fresh and a bit magical. Maybe I'll finally finish it on the 3DS.
Expertise:
Vicunas
Currently playing:
Dead Space 2
Favourite game of all time:
Sheep In Space



MARTYN CARROLL

Zelda: Ocarina Of Time. A boring, obvious choice, but it's simply the best game on the system. I'm looking forward to playing through it again on 3DS.
Expertise: Games that make blip-blip sounds
Currently playing:
Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee
Favourite game of all time:
Jet Set Willy



PAUL DAVIES

Mario 64!
Expertise: Banging my head against a brick wall
Currently playing:
Monster Hunter Tri
Favourite game of all time:
Ghouls 'N Ghosts

LOADING...



You'll have noticed an N64 proudly sitting on the cover of this issue. This is because we're starting a new series of features focusing on something we rarely touch upon, namely collecting.

Sure, we've thrown the odd price around here and there, and even featured proud gamers with their mighty collections in the past, but we've never done anything as comprehensive as our new Collector's Guide. Covering every aspect of collecting, it explains what makes the featured system desirable to collectors, reveals some of its best and most obscure peripherals, offers an interview with a collector and highlights a rare game that all collectors should strive to own. We also highlight a selection of games – import titles, the rarest PAL games and classic games – that no owner should be without.

One thing you might have noticed if you've already flicked though the article is a lack of prices for each item. Due to reader requests we've taken them out, because prices fluctuate and you should only ever consider paying what *you* feel something is worth. After all, there's no point offering information if it's factually incorrect by the time an article sees print.

We're really proud of The Collector's Guide and hope you'll enjoy reading it. Be sure to let us know on the forums exactly what you think of it.

Enjoy the magazine,



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Spidey may have had amazing friends on TV, but none of them appeared in Sega's scrolling fighter



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The co-founder of Sensible Software stops by the **Retro Gamer** offices to discuss the new version of *Speedball 2* that he has been working on. We ask him about iPad controls and ice cream.



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Simon Butler has worked on a huge number of 8-bit games ranging from classics like *Shadowfire* to disappointing efforts such as *Highlander*. Find out interesting anecdotes and how he sees the industry.



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The creator of *Leisure Suit Larry* has been involved in the industry for nearly three decades. He discusses his beginnings and reveals what happened to missing game *Sam Suede*.

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" A simple shooter became something fascinating "

Samuel Roberts



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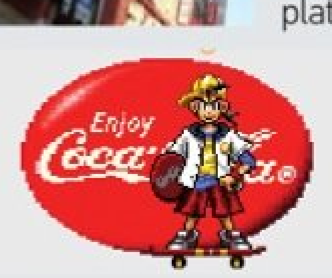


retro GAMER.net READER'S REVIVAL



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Matt Gander highlights another obscure Game Gear title that was only released in Japan. A pity, as it's a neat platformer that's fun to play.





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>> GIVE US TWO MINUTES AND WE'LL GIVE YOU THE RETRO WORLD



>> Has there ever been a more retro new console than the Nintendo 3DS? Judging by the initial line-up and the games we played at the system's Amsterdam launch event, you'd struggle to find anything to beat it in that respect. And that's only the start of the retro resurrection this month, with Sega and Jon Hare doing their part to bring the classics back to life on new systems

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The prolific 8-bit coder gives us his thoughts on his career and the industry



SEEING IS BELIEVING

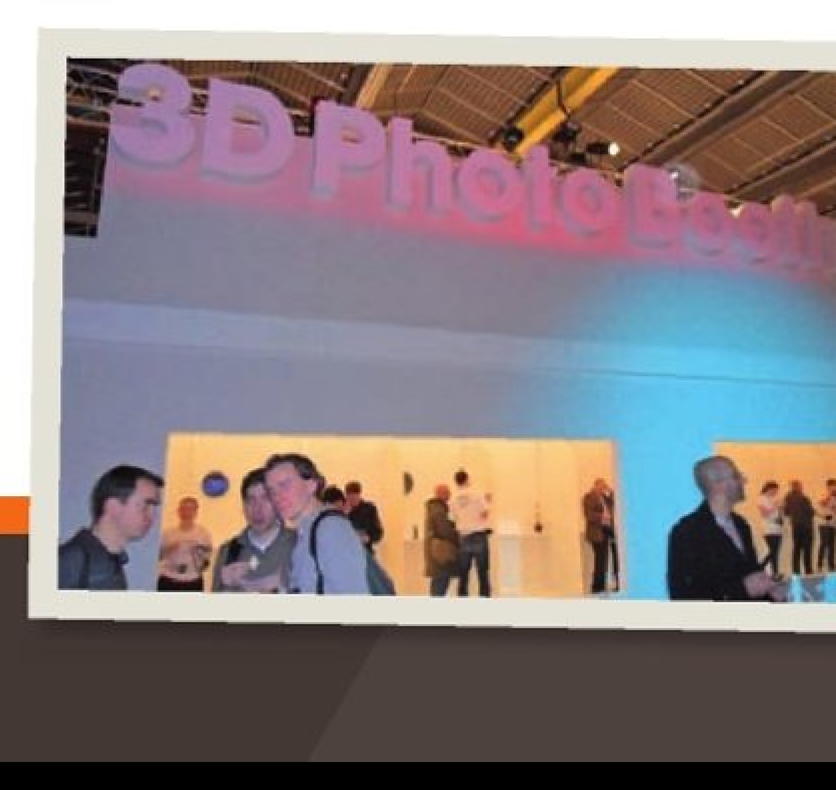
PREPARE TO SEE THE DS IN A WHOLE NEW DIMENSION

Retro Gamer was invited by Nintendo to visit the land famous for tulips, and other stuff we can't really discuss, this month to get some hands-on time with the 3DS ahead of its European launch and play some of the retro franchises making up a large selection of its diverse launch line-up.

Jonathan Ross kicked off the launch presentation, joined by Nintendo's head of European marketing, Laurent Fischer, who wasted no time explaining the key features of the new handheld. As well as stating the obvious 3D capabilities of the console, which brings games to life in stereoscopic 3D without the aid of glasses, Fischer revealed that the console would be fully backwards compatible with the DS and DSi, allowing you to carry over all of your downloaded games and content from both handhelds. Fischer also revealed that Nintendo is working with Aardman Animations and Eurosport, and is in talks with Sky, to bring 3D video of sport and animation shorts to the system.

Fischer then went into more detail regarding the new connectivity features of the 3DS, in particular about the console's Street Pass function, which allows users to chat, play together and share information easily and automatically – even when the 3DS is in sleep mode. By entering Street Pass Mii Plaza, which appears to be some sort of game lobby/social hub, users can view their Mii and those of users they're connected to, share information, and organise ad-hoc multiplayer match-ups. Nintendo has also partnered with global Wi-Fi providers to ensure easy, swift connectivity.

Street Fighter producer Yoshinori Ono then appeared on stage to explain how *Super Street Fighter IV 3D Edition* will be making full use of the connectivity features of the handheld. Using the 3DS's quartet

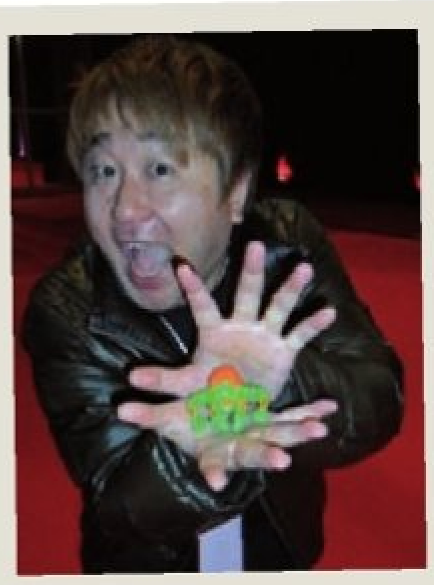




» We came away with two strong thoughts after the launch event: the 3DS is impressive, and we had this strange hankering to rent *Pleasantville*.

of versus modes – Online Vs Battle, Local Wireless, Street Pass and Channel Live, the latter being a spectator mode that allows you to watch your friends battle – we got the impression that fans will soon be able to fight any time and anywhere.

Then Ubisoft, Konami and Tecmo Koei's Team Ninja each took to the stage to discuss their launch titles for the console in turn, and the salient points were pretty much as follows: a new 3D *Rayman* and *Driver* title, and Julian Gollop's *Ghost Recon: Shadow Wars*, will form part of Ubisoft's 2011 3DS release schedule; *PES 2011 3D* will be a launch title and features a brand new player perspective; and *Dead Or Alive Dimensions*, which will support all the same connectivity features as *SSF IV 3D Edition*, was explained as being something of a 'best of' for the series, containing all the highlights of the franchise so far.



» *Street Fighter* producer Ono poses with his famous Blanka capsule toy, using it to demonstrate to us the awesomeness of the 3D effects in his game by throwing an air fireball.

Following the presentation, attendees were invited to experience the handhelds first-hand and were ushered inside a large exhibition room. The vast majority of the units were tethered to people in white T-shirts, thus playing them was a little like being handcuffed to a friendly shop assistant as you browse their bizarrely decorated electronics store.

We jest, but we did come away impressed with the standard of the 3DS's visuals, which are easily on par with a PSP and, at some points, even the Wii. The stereoscopic 3D effect was also impressive, giving the games real pop and depth of field – although the quality of the effect appears to rest on the style and look of the game; basically, we found that bold, bright, colourful – basically Nintendo – titles showed off the 3D effects better than a few of the darker, high-fidelity games on show.

Our only real concern was that the console's built-in gyroscope didn't feel as responsive as we hoped and didn't seem to really work that well in conjunction with 3D. Also, from the presentation it was clear that Nintendo was working to ensure that the 3DS improves on its forebears' online functionality with a seemingly comprehensive, easy to navigate, insta-multiplayer component, and sadly this wasn't demonstrated to us. Despite this, Yoshinori Ono did tell us during a group Q&A that Capcom had tested *Super Street Fighter IV*'s online multiplayer mode between NOA and NOJ and it worked well.

There's no denying that the 3DS is a great piece of kit and is supported by one of the strongest and most varied launch line-ups we've seen in a long time. There are plenty of franchises being given a new airing as well, which also greatly excites us. While the region-locking issue – this is the first Nintendo handheld to include it – may have left many fans a little peeved, and there are some who feel that the 3D is pure gimmickry, we're now confident that the quality of tech and diversity of games will go a long way to soften those opinions.

The 3DS launches in Europe on 25 March. The console will retail for around £220. *

Resurrected retro

The big retro releases that were demoed at the launch event



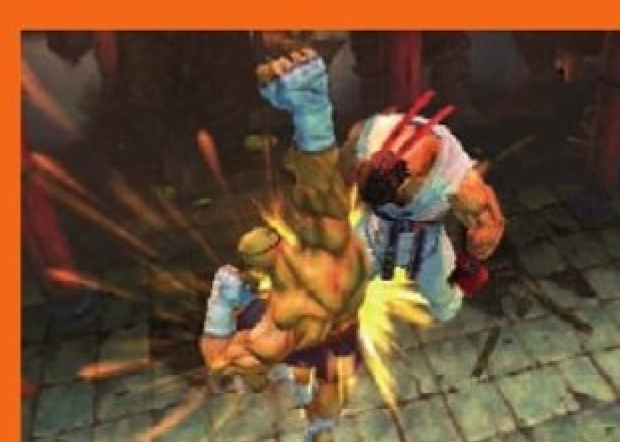
Kid Icarus: Uprising

■ It's clear this is the big title that Nintendo is hoping will show off the impressive power of the 3DS's custom 3D chip. It certainly does that, but it's not perfect. Only two stages were available to play (beginner and expert), and both were split into two distinct sections, beginning with Pit flying through the clouds in a stunning on-rails shooter. In these sections the new analogue stick was used to steer the cherub, while firing was actuated by holding down the left shoulder button and aiming a reticle by dragging the stylus around the touch-screen – admittedly not the most comfortable of control setups. The gameplay then switched to on-foot sections with Pit's movement and firing restricted to walking forward and strafing using the stick but 360-degree movement of the behind-the-shoulder camera handled with the stylus. Control concerns aside, the game looked superb. We hope Nintendo crams it with levels as the two we played were pretty short and easy to finish.



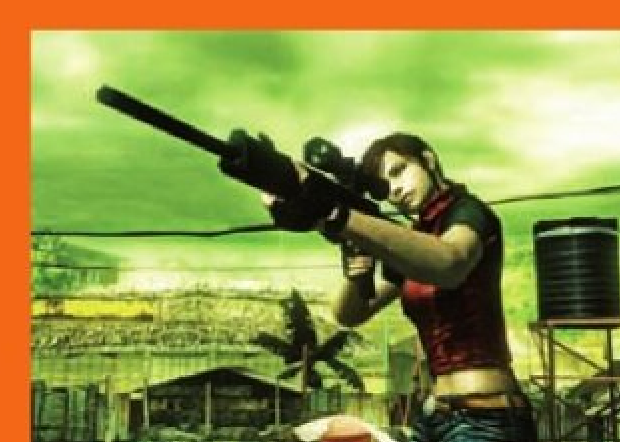
The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Time 3D

■ That *Star Fox 64* was a no-show at the event was a real shame, as Nintendo's remastering of *Ocarina Of Time* was the pick of the show. Three sections of the game were made playable – Kokiri Village, inside the Deku Tree and the battle with Gohma – and the game's 3D visuals were simply stunning, beautifully redrawn rather than just polished N64 graphics with a 3D filter slapped over the top. As a result, Hyrule looked lush, full of vibrancy, and the 3D effect was used to inject an added layer of depth and beauty to its world. Intelligently, the various weapons and items Link uses were conveniently managed via the touch-screen display, offering immediate and easy access. Our only real concern came from using the slingshot in first-person mode, which felt a little clunky. Whether Nintendo adds any new features to the game remains to be seen, but what we played appeared to be identical to the original.



Super Street Fighter IV 3D Edition

■ We had mixed opinions about *Super Street Fighter IV 3D Edition*. Not only is that title ridiculous, but the one aspect that Capcom was really pushing at the event – online connectivity – wasn't actually showcased. Instead, we got to play… well, *Super Street Fighter IV* on a small screen with the option to try out the new 'Dynamic' perspective – basically a forced isometric viewpoint that better shows off the 3D effects. We found the viewpoint a little gimmicky, truth be told, and couldn't really see the hardcore *Street Fighter* brigade embracing it. There's clearly a reason why no one has tried doing an isometric one-on-one fighting game in the past, and we discovered why: it doesn't give you the very best view of the fight or proximity of your opponent. Still, there's no denying that the game looked superb, and seeing *Street Fighter* on a Nintendo console again certainly brought a tear of joy to our eyes.



Resident Evil: The Mercenaries 3D

■ Capcom is releasing two *Resident Evil* games for the 3DS. This is one; the other is *Resident Evil Revelations*. The latter, which wasn't demoed at the event, will hark right back to the early PlayStation end of the franchise, offering a more 'classic' *Resident Evil* experience: a return to scares, a claustrophobic location, puzzles and, we assume, brilliantly bad dialogue. *The Mercenaries* couldn't be further away from that experience, taking the titular score-attack mode from *Resident Evil 4* and *5* and turning it into a complete game by piling it with levels, weapons and objectives. The demo featured two stages, one from each game, and featured four playable characters: Chris Redfield, Jack Krauser, Hunk and Mercenaries newbie Claire Redfield, each with their own unique weapon loadouts. Capcom later told us to expect more characters, stages and an online co-op mode in the finished game.

>> RETRO RECOLLECTIONS WITH CELEB IAIN LEE

Here's the bio...
Iain Lee has been a fervent gamer since he was tiny. And that was a long time ago. In between playing computer games and collecting crap from eBay, he has presented Channel 4's *The 11 O'Clock Show* and *Rise*, and currently does bits of stand-up as well as presenting the *2 Hour Long Late Night Radio Show* on Absolute Radio at 11pm.



Hi there. My name's **Iain Lee**. You might remember me from Thumb Bandits, The 11 O'Clock Show and Absolute Radio, but now I'm here to confess my love for retro

It's a mad world

Do you ever wonder if you're going mad? Not mad in the sense of rushing around killing as many people as you can before blowing up your place of work because you find your boss annoying. No, mad as in you're the only person who can remember something that happened and no one else can. A bit like in that scene from *Invasion Of The Body Snatchers* where everyone has had their bodies taken over by the pods except for that one bloke and he's shouting to everyone, "You're all pod monsters and you'll never get me!"

Actually, even though I did make that scene up, the example doesn't work at all. Sorry to have wasted your time there.

I guess I could just cut to the chase and tell you what I'm thinking, as that would probably speed things up a bit.

No one I know seems to remember *Sim* on the BBC Micro.

The thing is, this game was such an important part of my growing up that I simply expect everyone in the world to know about it. I thought that people would have the spaceman on his jetpack tattooed on their bodies. I believed that you would be able to buy diamond rings in the shape of the little crystals he had to collect. I hoped that we would actually have sodding jetpacks by now!

But no, there is no one out there that remembers this amazing and incredibly hard game. I say no one; I am, of course, exaggerating for dramatic effect. My mate Spray Dough did a brilliant remake of it a few years back. I played it and loved it. Although I'm not sure if anyone else did.

The game was awesome. You wore a little jetpack and you floated around the screens, collecting crystals and depositing them somewhere so your ship would have enough fuel to take off. Simple. I think this was the premise. I still have no internet and therefore no access to Wikipedia, the online home for made-up crap put on there by people with nothing better to do with their time than lie to millions of other people. [citation needed] Thanks, guys.

Sim was also bloody hard, as I remember. There was one bit where you had to navigate a maze that was pitch black. All you could see was you. And to make it worse, you were being chased by some monster that travelled faster than you and could see where it was going. It was actually impossible. Imagine that: an impossible game.

Maybe I'm wrong. Perhaps all of you are reading this and shouting at the magazine that of course you remember *Sim*, and that I'm just asking the wrong people. If you do, and you're not the sort of person to kill a colleague because they smell, could we hang out a bit, please? Thanks, then. Bye.



You were being chased by a monster that was faster than you and could see where it was going. It was impossible

DREAM ON

SEGA ANNOUNCES DREAMCAST COLLECTION





Hoping to replicate the success of the *Mega Drive Ultimate Collection*, Sega has officially announced the forthcoming release of a Dreamcast collection for the Xbox 360 and PC.

While the *Mega Drive Ultimate Collection* featured a varied selection of 40 games, this compendium, for obvious space reasons, will feature one tenth of that number: *Crazy Taxi*, *Sonic Adventure*, *Sega Bass Fishing* and *Space Channel 5: Part 2*. In addition to receiving enhanced visuals, all of the games will come with online leaderboards and achievements.

While we certainly welcome Sega delving back into the Dreamcast's rich and exclusive catalogue in a bid to hopefully help fill the *Shenmue III* fund jar, news of the release has been met with mixed reactions by many Sega loyalists, including us.

Most who were looking forward to seeing the Dreamcast's varied and cult library of games get a good airing on new consoles have been left understandably miffed to discover that the games appearing on the collection are titles that are available or soon to be available to download individually on Xbox Live Arcade and PSN. It does take the shine off the pack somewhat, especially for the poor souls who have already dropped the cash on purchasing the digital versions. Well, at least PC owners will be happy to be getting these games.

> **"We welcome Sega's bid to fill the Shenmue III fund jar"**

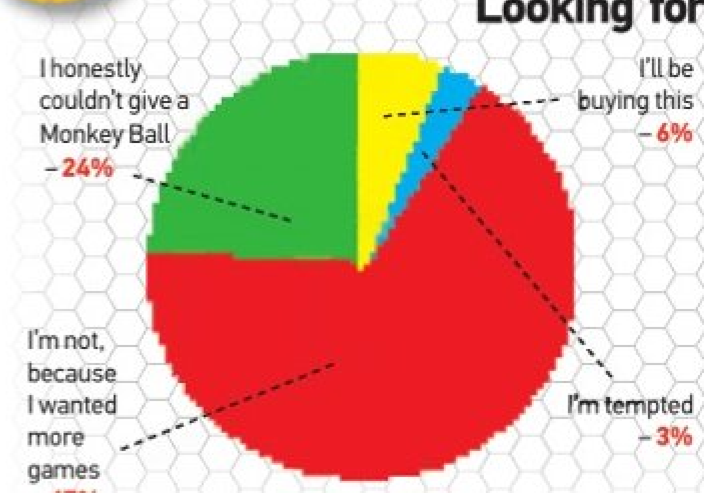
We applaud Sega's attachment to its old machines and IPs, but we would have preferred to have seen a few of the Dreamcast's cult games – *Headhunter*, *Dynamite Deka*, *Chu Chu Rocket*, *Toy Commander*… we could go on – appear in this particular compilation, along with the more popular and obvious candidates for inclusion like *Jet Set Radio*. Here's hoping that Sega reads this and surprises us with a far worthier second volume.

The Dreamcast Collection will be out on the PC and Xbox 360 in Europe by the time you read this. There is no word as yet on whether it will be heading to the PS3.

FORUM OPINION

VISIT RETROGAMER.NET/FORUM TO HAVE YOUR SAY

Looking forward to the DC Collection?



"I may pick it up once it hits the bargain bins just to play *Space Channel 5: Part 2*, even though I already have the rare-ish PS2 version of that game" – **DreamcastRIP**

"A really missed opportunity by Sega. Not only could it have done with more games on it, but better ones too. *Crazy Taxi* and *Sonic Adventure* are great, but both have been ported to other systems and XBLA too. And I'd have much preferred *Sega Marine Fishing* over *Bass*" – **ShadowNeku**

MICRO BYTES

Snippets of news from the exciting world of retro



» Aliens discovered on the Famicom Disk System

A rare and unreleased FDS prototype of a licensed *Aliens* game by Square caused quite a bit of excitement in the Nintendo collector scene recently after a copy surfaced on a Japanese auction site. The game is basically a more colourful conversion of the 1987 MSX *Aliens* game from Squaresoft. The ROM has since been released online, which means you can experience it for yourself.



» LittleBigHyrule

We've seen a few impressive retro-style games created using *LittleBigPlanet*'s tools – everything from *Gradius* to *Donkey Kong*. And with the sequel now offering even more creation apparatus, it was a matter of time before someone created something to catch our eye. Well, a Swedish gamer known as BluetinBerry has re-created the first stage of *The Legend Of Zelda* in the game.



» Sega Rally Online

Sega fans' tongues were set wagging after a rating entry for *Sega Rally Online Arcade* found its way onto the Korean Game Rating Board, submitted by Sony. Later details revealed it to be a downloadable version of the underrated 2007 *Sega Rally* update. Let's just hope there are no licensing issues this time, à la *OutRun Online Arcade*, to cause the game to be taken down from the store.

Here's my bio…

In 1992 I started out on *Mean Machines Sega* and *Nintendo Magazine System*. In 1995 I became editor of *CVG*. I led the *CVG* website from 1998 until Christmas 2000, then I left journalism to be concept design manager at Criterion Games. I returned to journalism in 2002 and from 2005 I've been running my own company, Unlikely Hero.



Hello, retro gamers. My name is **Paul Davies**. I used to be the editor of CVG and have also worked on a number of classic gaming magazines over the years



Up, Up, Down, Down, Left, Right, A, B, it's ringing!

In early 2000, mankind was recovering from the shock of nothing disastrous happening at all at the start of the new millennium. The console-gaming world, however, turned a bit mad.

It more or less started with this: 'Nintendo announces that it will release a cellular phone integrated into a Game Boy Advance in 2001' (GameSpot, 27 March 2000). The news was greeted on the *CVG* online team with a resounding 'Eh?' It wasn't very loud since there were only three of us. Anyway, slightly thrown, and with Patrick Garratt already on the blower terrorising a long list of contacts, the very idea of a Game Boy phone started to seem like a plan for world domination. Or why bother?

I remember Pat restating the news several times, trying it for size in many different ways, searching for meaning. 'And it's a phone!' In August at Nintendo Space World, it transpired that Game Boy Advance wasn't a phone after all. But we had months of speculation between times, which by the way included our near-certainty that GameCube would be known as StarCube, embarrassingly shot down by Miyamoto in Nintendo's address to the assembled press that afternoon. Spoil sports.

I didn't think much more about the Game Boy Advance Mobile Phone until recently and the whole Nintendo 3DS vs. Next Generation Mobile Entertainment Portable (NGP) excitement. In the past 11 years, mobile phones have evolved along similar lines to hole-in-the-wall cash machines, starting with monochrome text displays and moving toward attractive full-colour LCD monitors capable of playing fairly decent videogames. No wonder there's always a long queue outside Barclays. So when Nintendo readied to unveil 3DS, a significant number of respected journalists were wondering if it might also be a phone. Some asked Reggie Fils-Aime to clarify. Which would've been weird, I think, had Nintendo not started it all in March 2000. Guess what? It's not a phone; it's a games console. Similarly, Sony execs are being faced with the same question about NGP. Did you not consider making this into a phone? No. Oh. Right. What about battery life?

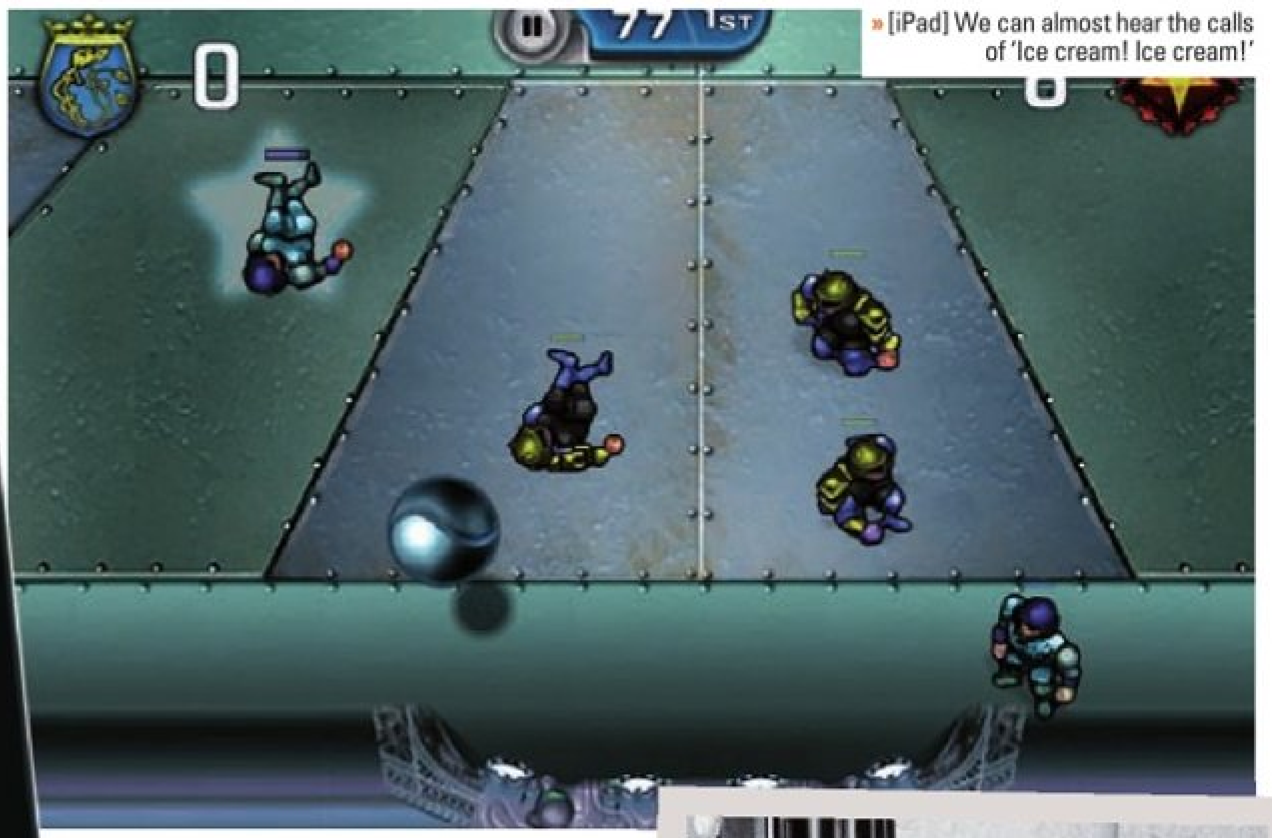
iPhone is massively popular, I get it. I can listen to music and play some decent games on iPhone, and make phone calls. It's a stroke of genius, and my iPhone and I are now inseparable. But even now I still don't get the connection between a proposed kick-ass gaming handheld and the fuss automatically arising that the thing could potentially incorporate a phone – any more than I would want it to make toast, in fact, or shave my face.

Call me old-fashioned, but when I switch a console on to play a game I generally want to switch off from everything else. I couldn't be doing with the possibility of receiving a phonecall halfway through a furious boss battle, or the bit when my mentor explains the part about my secret destiny.

That's why 3DS and NGP are not phones, see.

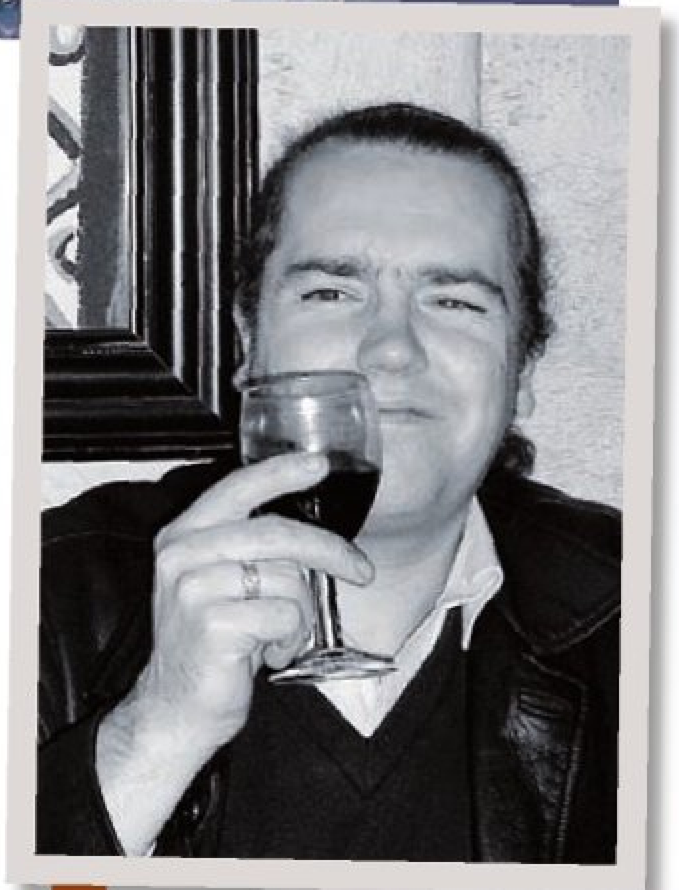
Did you consider making it into a phone? No. Oh. Right. What about battery life?





» [iPad] We can almost hear the calls of 'Ice cream! Ice cream!'





PASS THE ICE CREAM

WE SPEAK TO JON HARE ABOUT HIS NEW IOS UPDATE OF THE BITMAP BROTHERS' SPEEDBALL 2

S*peedball 2* is one of the Amiga's most revered games, thanks to its sublime gameplay, excellent controls and frantic pacing. It's been released on numerous systems since it made its Amiga debut and is now available for Apple's iOS platforms. We caught up with Jon Hare, to find out a little more about it.

Retro Gamer: So is this going to be a port of *Speedball 2*?
Jon Hare: *Speedball 2 Evolution* is not a port of *Speedball 2*, but is a remake of a classic game on brand new technology. I have been working closely with Mike Montgomery and the Bitmap Brothers since 2004 and have helped Mike get conversions of Bitmap games done before. This time I have been working with Vivid Games for over a year. We looked at the original source code and then proceeded to build the game from the ground up, which has enabled us to properly take advantage of the touch screen and tilt technology and the Bluetooth and Wi-Fi connectability that wasn't around when the game was originally made.

RG: Are you concerned that the frantic joystick manipulations of *Speedball 2* perhaps won't translate well to iPhone?
JH: No, the control system works incredibly well. We have given the game two basic control mechanisms. The first, Tilt Control, is very intuitive after about 30 seconds of use. We have a full *Sensible Soccer*-style player selection engine sitting underneath this which helps to keep the action flowing and to give the player the man he wants to use without the need for a player select button. The second control system is the virtual joystick; this has been seen on a number of iOS games before and works very well too, although it is, in my opinion, a retro way of playing the game.

RG: What's it like being in charge of such an important and well-respected game?
JH: For me it is normal to be in charge of important games, so I always approach my work expecting nothing less than success. I am happy that we have had the opportunity to work on it and I am pleased that it is a great version of a great game, which is owned by one of my very closest friends. I'd also like to add that, in my opinion, this is the best version of *Speedball 2* since the launch of the original.

RG: Can you go into more detail about some of the new gameplay features that have been added?
JH: We have increased the number of pitches and greatly enhanced the quality of the graphics but the game is still very definitely and instantly recognisable as *Speedball*. The main area we have added new features is in the depth of teams and competitions in the game. In addition to the established two divisions of eight teams such as Brutal Deluxe and Super Nashwan, we have added a whole extra layer to the game. The competition structure is a bit more like *Sensible Soccer*, in that it offers you a choice of Quick Match, Preset Competition (choose from five cups and leagues in the game), Custom Competition (devise your own league, cup or tournament) and Career Mode.

RG: Finally, what do you think about the new *Cannon Fodder* game?
JH: I find the idea of the new *Cannon Fodder* game quite amusing. Having worked on a design for *Cannon Fodder 3* as early as 1999 – which had development started and stopped three times by Codemasters from 1999 to 2002 – I am interested to see what these guys come up with. All I can say is, good luck to them and 'Please don't fuck it up, it is one of my babies'. *

* WHAT WE THINK

Darran



While I have great faith in Jon's skills, I can't help but recall the sheer number of joysticks I smashed when playing the original Amiga game. Here's hoping my iPad fares better.

Stuart



I had my concerns about how well the game would control, but if this new update of *Speedball 2* has been built from the ground up then it could be something special.

David



I'm a huge fan of *Speedball 2*, and have many versions (including the deleted Live Arcade version). I love the idea of playing on iPad, but I'd love *Cannon Fodder* more.

THE Vault

TREASURES FROM … TRO CHEST

TREASURE OF THE MONTH



Capcom Wall Decals

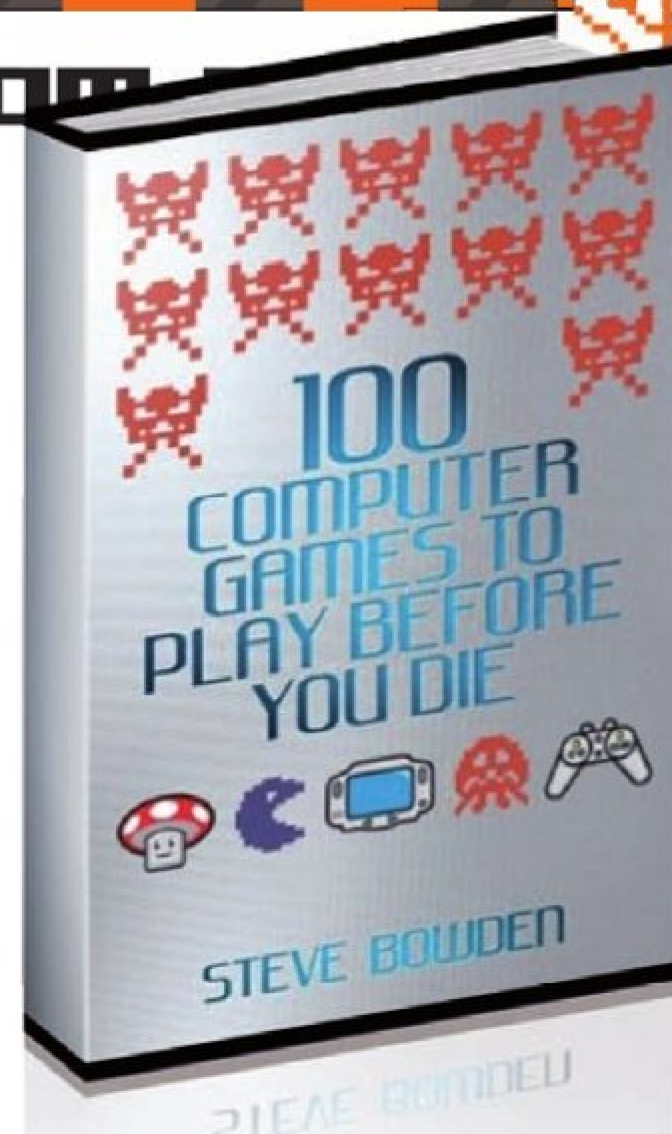
- **RRP:** $49.99 (approx £30)
- **Buy it from:** www.thinkgeek.com

Since scooting onto the scene in the late Eighties, Mega Man has appeared in a frankly ridiculous number of games and spin-offs, his own anime and manga series, and transformed into all sorts of weird and wonderful items of merchandise over the years… but probably never, even in his wildest dreams, did he expect to see his face on a series of wall stickers. Possibly.

We've seen plenty of wall decals appear in these pages, but never ones quite as splendid as these. Available to buy from ThinkGeek, this set of Capcom wall decals includes two sheets of vinyl stickers featuring 25 restickable decals of Mega Man and his various robotic adversaries, all taken from his 8-bit NES days.

In addition to the Blue Bomber and Dr Wily's first batch of robotic minions, the pack includes a sticker of Mega Man's gargantuan health bar, some plasma blasts and even an extra life, so you can apply, remove, move and reapply these graphics to create a stunning mural of a *Mega Man* battle scene to impress your family and friends.

Does that mean we can expect more Capcom franchises to get a similar sticky treatment? *Ghouls 'N Ghosts* and *Strider* would certainly be on our wish list.



100 Computer Games To Play Before You Die

- **RRP:** £7.99
- **Buy it from:** www.amazon.co.uk

Landing on the mat this month was a book, which, as you can ascertain from its title, attempts to condense the thousands upon millions of games that have been released over the last few decades into a list of 100 titles you need to play before exiting our dying planet. While we were ready to slam this book shut after seeing an entry for *Batman: Arkham Asylum* five pages in, we persevered and were pleasantly surprised with some well-written and insightful appraisals, many of the usual names you'd expect to see in a book of classic games, and some not so, such as the excellent *God Hand* and *The World Ends With You*.

Floating Magazine Rack

- **RRP:** £25
- **Buy it from:** www.funkyhoney.co.uk

Looking for a peculiar way to display and organise 12 of your very favourite issues of **Retro Gamer**? Then we might have found the perfect solution. Available to buy from the very pink online gift store Funky Honey, these magazine racks can be used to hold, display and even dry, should you be unfortunate enough to spill nasty liquids over the pages – although we don't recommend resting them too close to an open fire; bit dangerous, that – a dozen normal-sized magazines. Sadly, it doesn't hold those giant seven-metre-wide ones you sometimes see in Spanish supermarkets.





Kong

- **RRP:** £14.95
- **Buy it from:** www.retro-play.co.uk

Retro Play has a great selection of retro games across a whole range of systems, so selecting one to highlight this month didn't prove easy. In the end we decided to see what they had for sale in their MSX library and were instantly taken by the hilarious cover art for this *Donkey Kong* clone by Eurosoft. Seriously, could it not have found a picture of a more menacing-looking primate to front its game? And is it just us or do you think that the game's misleading tagline makes it sound more like a clone of *Donkey Kong Jr*?





Speedball 2 T-Shirt

- **RRP:** £14.95
- **Buy it from:** www.retrogt.com

Retro GT has added a few new designs to its retro T-shirt range recently, and among our favourites is this brilliant *Speedball 2* shirt, commemorating the upcoming iOS release. As fans will know, this print is inspired by the game's iconic gym screen, where players could invest their hard-earned winnings on upgrading their players, or replace any that got injured or killed during the matches (read: fights). The shirts are available in a variety of colours, including a bizarre bright shade of pink that hilariously jars with the violent nature of the game. Seeing it made us do a little laugh into our teas.



Dirty Harry T-Shirt

- **RRP:** £15
- **Buy it from:** www.nerdoh.co.uk

Despite the popularity of the novels and more so the movies, Harry Callahan only appeared in one videogame during his decorated career as a gun-carrying quip fountain. Now we've tenuously linked the character to our beloved pastime, we are perfectly within our rights to flag up this militant *Dirty Harry* T-shirt, which features a print of Harry's gun – the classic .44 Magnum – which is, we're assured, 'the most powerful hand gun in the world'. We've never fired one so cannot substantiate the claim. The T-shirt looks cool, though. It made our day. Arf.

Sega Saturn Modification

- **RRP:** Varies between £25-35, £50 for full modification (plus postage)
- **Buy it from:** www.consolepassion.co.uk

If you've purchased a Sega Saturn recently, you might want to give some serious thought to getting it modded. The machine was most popular in Japan and saw a number of great titles released in that territory that sadly never reached our Western shores. For £25, Console Passion will fit a 50Hz/60Hz switch to allow games to be displayed in full screen and full speed, and for £35 a region toggle switch allowing you to play any game from any country can also be added. A crisp £50 note will pay for both operations.



TOP FIVE T-SHIRTS



01 A Miserable Little Pile Of Secrets T-shirt
- **RRP:** $24.99 (approx £16)
- **Buy it from:** meatbun.us/store/



02 Amstrad
- **RRP:** £14.95
- **Manufacturer:** Retro GT
- **Buy it from:** www.retrogt.com



03 Sonic Power-ups
- **RRP:** $14.95 (approx £10)
- **Manufacturer:** Retro GT
- **Buy it from:** www.retrogt.com

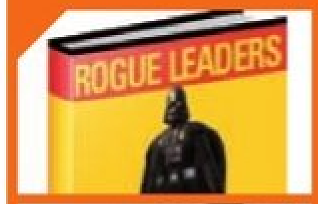


04 Coexist T-shirt
- **RRP:** $15.99 - $17.99
- **Manufacturer:** Thinkgeek.com
- **Buy it from:** www.thinkgeek.com



05 Dizzy
- **RRP:** £14.95
- **Manufacturer:** Retro GT
- **Buy it from:** www.retrogt.com

TOP FIVE BOOKS



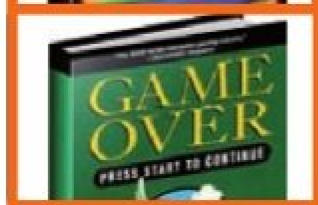
01 Rogue Leaders: The Story Of LucasArts
- **RRP:** £34.99 ■ **Publisher:** Titan Books
- **Buy it from:** www.amazon.co.uk



02 Classic Home Video Games 1985-1988 ■ **RRP:** $55 (approx £34)
- **Author:** Brett Weiss
- **Buy it from:** www.amazon.com



03 Racing The Beam
- **RRP:** £14.95
- **Publisher:** MIT Press
- **Buy it from:** www.amazon.co.uk



04 Game Over
- **RRP:** £22.14
- **Publisher:** Cyberactive Media Group
- **Buy it from:** www.amazon.co.uk



05 Gamespite Quarterly: Issue 3
- **RRP:** From $12 ■ **Author:** Jeremy Parish
- **Buy it from:** www.gamespite.com

TOP FIVE MISCELLANEOUS



01 Mega Drive Card Holder
- **RRP:** $34.10 (approx £21)
- **Manufacturer:** Banpresto
- **Buy it from:** www.strapya-world.com



02 Grow Your Own Moai Statue (aka DOH)
- **RRP:** $5.99 (£4)
- **Buy it from:** www.thinkgeek.com



03 Retro Videogame Propaganda Posters
- **RRP:** £33 ■ **Manufacturer:** Steven Thomas ■ **Buy it from:** www.thinkgeek.com



04 Headcrab Plushie
- **RRP:** $24.99 (approx £16)
- **Manufacturer:** Unknown
- **Buy it from:** www.thinkgeek.com



05 Namco Dioramas
- **RRP:** £5
- **Manufacturer:** Namco
- **Buy it from:** www.japantrendshop.com

retroradar

>> GIVE US TWO MINUTES AND WE'LL GIVE YOU THE RETRO



* A MOMENT WITH...

Simon Butler

Every issue we put an industry veteran in the hotseat. This month, we talk to 8-bit coding legend Simon Butler

Who is Simon Butler?

He's an 8-bit coder who has worked on an impressive range of classic games. He's worked at Denton Designs, Imagine, Ocean and many other companies and has added his graphical flair to everything from *Shadowfire* to *Platoon* and *Total Recall*

Which of your games would you recommend and why?
Shadowfire. It was pretty groundbreaking at the time. It was the first icon-driven adventure if memory serves. I designed the characters, did the cover art layout and wrote the rather clichéd story for the manual. A good little strategic title.
I'd like to bring the characters back and do something with more substance, for today's market, but no one would go for it because it's not a license or franchise. C'est la vie.

What is your proudest memory?
Working for Ocean. It was a chequered experience with good times and bad, but something I will always be thankful for and I will never forget.

What's the most biggest problem you encountered while working on a game?
Pedantic coders and corporate bullshit. One of my main faults is that I speak as I find, so I had very little tolerance for in-fighting and backstabbing. Some of the 'suits' made my flesh crawl; they'd sell their granny for a promotion. Coder snobbery and their holier-than-thou attitudes also put my teeth on edge on a regular basis.

Which games industry veteran do you most admire?
I would normally say Steve Cain, but that is mostly because he was my best friend. So the honest-to-goodness industry veteran would have to be Gary Bracey. He did a lot – not just for me, but all the team at Ocean. He was a grafter and I owe him a lot.

How would you want your games to be remembered?
Fondly if possible. I worked on a lot of dross in the early years but there are one or two titles in there that aren't too bad.

Which games do you wish you had made and why?
Starquake was always a favourite and *Sacred Armour Of Antiriad* was another. *Knight Lore* took my breath away at the time. Looking back you wonder why, but the charm is still there after all these years. There's just too many to list really. There were so many games released at that time. It sometimes beggars belief how fortunate we were going through such a prolific period in the history of the industry.



» [ZX Spectrum] At the time, *Vindicator* was dubbed as a sequel to *Green Beret*, but it was completely unrelated, as Konami had its own official arcade port.

What opportunities has making videogames given you?
I've worked in America, Germany, Poland and France. I never know what tomorrow is going to bring.

What's your darkest memory of being in the games industry?
I don't have one really. There have been ups and downs, but nothing truly 'dark'. Some might say I've been my own worst enemy at times, but to paraphrase: I'd rather be hated for who I am than loved for who I'm not.

So although my career has been a series of progression and reversal of fortunes, I've always been true to myself and I'm still here batting away. Onwards and upwards.



And your best?
The very fact that almost 30 years later I'm still doing what I enjoy and that, funnily enough, people remember me for one reason or another.

Can you share one interesting gaming related anecdote with us?
Ocean once had a coder from Wigan who claimed to have written *Super Mario Bros.*

How has the industry changed over the past 20 years?
It appears that fun takes a back seat to business, but that's just my slant on things. But small teams independent teams are springing up again and 2D has reared its pixelated head, so maybe things haven't changed that much really. *



» [ZX Spectrum] Groundbreaking, icon-driven adventure from Denton Designs that's still great fun to play today.



retrodiary

4 March – 31 March

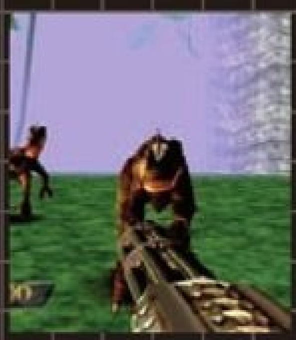
>> A month of retro events both past and present



4 March 1974
■ Atari releases its latest *Pong* coin-op arcade game, a four-player version called *Quadrapong*.



4 March 1981
■ Electronics company Sinclair Computers is renamed Sinclair Research. Just a few days later the ZX81 is launched.



4 March 1997
■ Acclaim's first-person shooter *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter*, is released on the N64 and becomes an instant hit.



4 March 1999
■ The first incarnation of Bandai's handheld games console, the Wonderswan, is released in Japan.



7 March 1983
■ *Donkey Kong II*, the brown-cased twin-screen Game & Watch handheld from Nintendo, goes on sale.



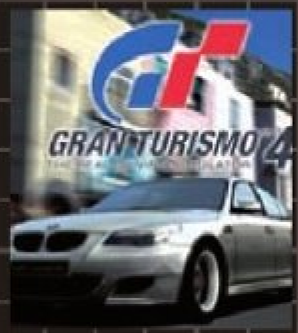
7 March 1989
■ *Strider*, Capcom's much-loved arcade game featuring the acrobatic ninja Hiryu, is released. Darran Jones is pleased…



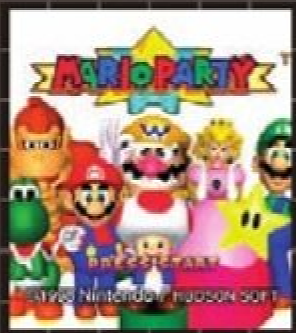
7 March 2009
■ The dubiously titled *Destroy All Humans: Big Willy Unleashed* is released on the Wii by THQ.



8 March 1983
■ The first issue of *Home Computing Weekly* hits the news-stands.



9 March 2005
■ Racing simulator *Gran Turismo 4* screeches onto the PlayStation 2, leaving virtual skid-marks and whiplash aplenty.



9 March 1999
■ The European edition of *Mario Party 64*, developed by Hudson Soft for Nintendo, is released on the N64.



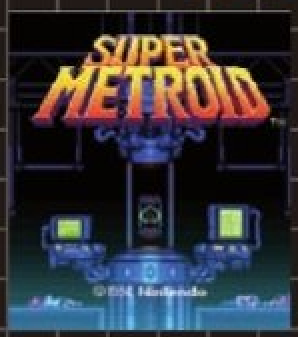
11 March 1995
■ Square releases the RPG game *Chrono Trigger* on the SNES. It's only available in the US and Japan.



14 March 2002
■ Microsoft's big black and green box of tricks, the Xbox, is finally made available to UK gamers.



15 March 1991
■ The popular Barcode Battler handheld game hits the fad-crazed streets of Japan.



19 March 1994
■ Samus makes her return in *Super Metroid*, released today in Japanese stores.



23 March 2007
■ The sixth game in the *Burnout* series, *Dominator*, arrives in the UK. Good game, but no Crash mode!



26 March 2002
■ *Star Wars: Jedi Knight II – Jedi Outcast* makes its debut on the PC.



26 March 2004
■ Konami's *Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes* arrives in the UK for Nintendo's Gamecube.



28 March 2003
■ Nintendo's compact flip-top, Game Boy Advance SP, is released in the UK.



30 March 2007
■ The awesome *Metal Slug Anthology* is released across Europe on the Nintendo Wii.



31 March 2011
■ New issue of **Retro Gamer** hits the streets.

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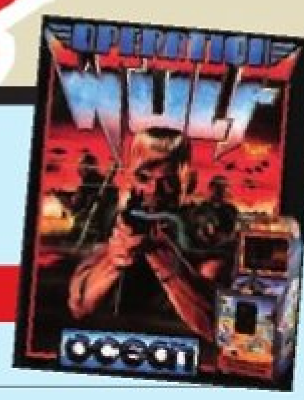
BACK TO THE EIGHTIES



» [Amiga] Good god? Yes I am. No earthquakes for you, me laddo.

CHARTS

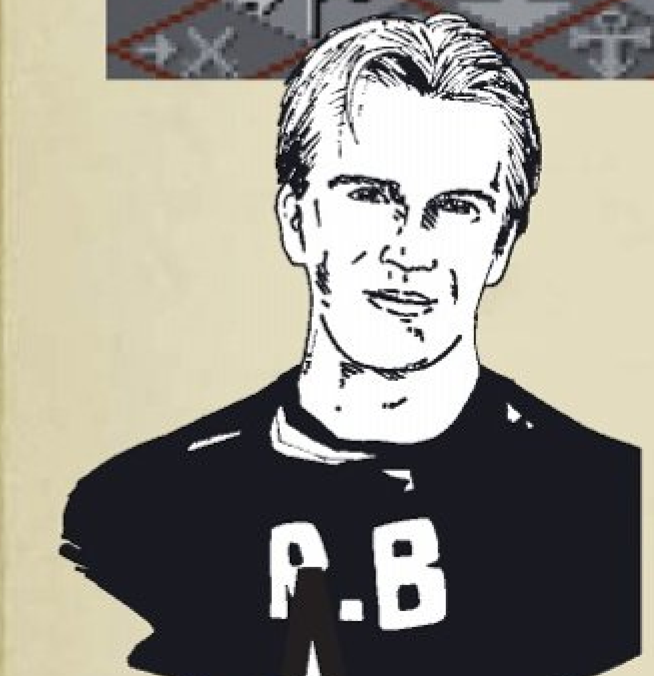
APRIL 1989



AMSTRAD	
1	Operation Wolf (Ocean)
2	RoboCop (Ocean)
3	Thunder Blade (US Gold)
4	Giants (US Gold)
5	Advanced Pinball Simulator (Codemasters)

» [Amiga] Superlative shoot-'em-up with a nifty bit of marketing getting Bomb The Bass to supply the sounds.





THE LATEST NEWS FROM APRIL 1989

APRIL 89 – Game Boy ahoy, Davis sinks a 16-bit pink, Chuckie goes Choccy, Bitmap Brothers has a Megablast, popular Populous arrives, Zombi released, Sphinx Jinx Computer Club links and Activision goes ghostbusting. Richard Burton gets slimed…

The much-anticipated worldwide debut of Nintendo's first handheld console since the Game & Watch series had finally arrived… in Japan. 21 April saw the arrival of the Game Boy, immediately reinvigorating gaming on the move. Opening sales of the Game Boy were tremendous, helped in no small part by the pack-in game being the classic block-twisting game, *Tetris*. The UK release was a mere 18 months away.

CDS Microsystems had dusted off its classic *Steve Davis Snooker* game, gave it a rub down with a bar towel and released a newly enhanced version for the Atari ST. *Steve Davis World Snooker* was not just a snooker simulation but also included billiards and pool variants. While the Spectrum version might have been a great play back in 1984, the ST version barely warranted a second look five years later. Even Steve Davis himself wouldn't have been that interested…

Another company ripping the dust sheets off its former glories was A'n'F Software with its 16-bit release of *Chuckie Egg II: Choccy Egg* for the Amiga and ST. Henhouse Harry has to collect the ingredients for these chocolate eggs by exploring the chocolate factory, a sprawling set of 120 interlinked screens, which in truth owed more to *Jet Set Willy* than the original *Chuckie Egg*. Sadly, the simplicity of the original game was not there and neither was the gameplay.

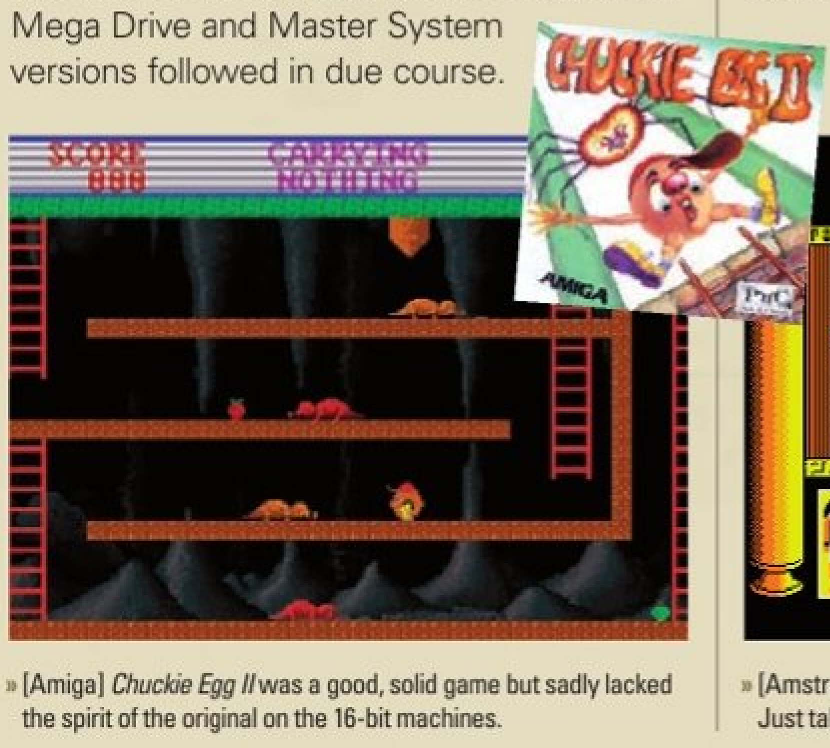
Mirrorsoft and the Bitmap Brothers had some exciting news in the form of their vertical scrolling shoot-'em-up, *Xenon 2: Megablast*. Although still in the developmental stages, they revealed that musician Tim Simenon, founder of Bomb The Bass, had collaborated on the music, supplying the track *Megablast (Hip Hop On Precinct 13)* for the game.

Early previews looked to be something quite special, and when *Xenon 2* was finally released in August, it lived up to the hype, with the Amiga and ST versions standing out as one of the best shooters of the time. Mega Drive and Master System versions followed in due course.

Over in football cliché land, two companies weren't quite as over the moon as they should have been, as they released their football games, *MicroProse Soccer* (MicroProse) and *Kick Off* (Anco), at the same time. With *MicroProse Soccer* expected to beat all comers with its top-down view and arcade-style gameplay, it was left to Anco and its *Kick Off* game to try to cause an upset.

Thankfully for all concerned, both titles played a blinder across most formats, with the notable exceptions being the Commodore 64 version of *Kick Off* and *MicroProse Soccer* on the Amiga, which were both substituted at half time for being rubbish.

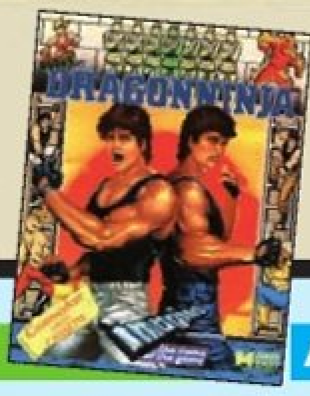
Something a bit different had been developed by Bullfrog and



» [Amiga] *Chuckie Egg II* was a good, solid game but sadly lacked the spirit of the original on the 16-bit machines.



» [Amstrad] *Sphinx Jinx* was a Home Computer Club exclusive. Just take any three items from 49p and you're in the club…







COMMODORE 64

1 Dragon Ninja (Ocean)
2 RoboCop (Ocean)
3 World Games (Kixx)
4 In Crowd (Ocean)
5 WEC Le Mans (Imagine)

AMIGA

1 Falcon (Spectrum Holobyte)
2 Sword Of Sodan (Discovery Software)
3 TV Sports Football (Cinemaware/Mirrorsoft)
4 Elite (Firebird)
5 Lombard RAC Rally (Mandarin Software)

MUSIC

1 Eternal Flame (Bangles)
2 If You Don't Know Me By Now (Simply Red)
3 Like A Prayer (Madonna)
4 Baby I Don't Care (Transvision Vamp)
5 Americanos (Holly Johnson)

APRIL 1989 NEWS



» Anfield, home of Liverpool FC, was turned into a flower-filled shrine to the 96 supporters who lost their lives.

15 April saw Britain's worst ever sporting tragedy unfold at Hillsborough, the home stadium of Sheffield Wednesday. The semifinal of the FA Cup between Liverpool and Nottingham Forest kicked off at 3pm and after six minutes the match was stopped as Liverpool fans in the Leppings Lane End of the stadium started to spill onto the pitch.

Many Liverpool fans had been delayed getting to the stadium by roadworks, which contributed to a bottleneck of supporters outside the stadium. With kick-off fast approaching and thousands of fans pressing to get through the turnstiles, the police decided to open a large exit gate to relieve the congestion.

This exacerbated the situation as the influx of supporters headed for the already overcrowded central standing pens rather than being directed to the side pens, which were not as full.

The full impact of the ensuing disaster became apparent, with many fans being lifted over the fencing at pitch side as well as many being plucked from the crush by fellow fans in the West Stand above the Leppings Lane End. Such was the force of the crush, many of the victims died standing up.

Advertising hoardings were used as makeshift stretchers and fans performed first aid while police held back a convoy of ambulances from entering the stadium. In all, 96 fans died. Consensus points to a failure of crowd control for the disaster, with the FA and police heavily criticised for not delaying the kick-off.

Peter Molyneux, and was released this month in the form of *Populous*, one of the first encounters with the god sim genre.

It was an involved game in which you would influence rather than control landscapes and the people who lived and worked upon it. *Populous* allowed you to build a civilisation and mould your terrain with the ultimate aim of pitting your people against a fellow god's civilisation. As you become a deity to be reckoned with your strength increases, allowing you to place 'acts of god' in your rival's territory. Invoking an earthquake or placing a volcano slap bang in the middle of their populace with one key press is what you call a proper power-up…

Populous was an instant hit, a game of originality that created its own unique atmosphere that kept you engaged for hours. Atari ST and Amiga owners were the first to play god, with a range of console and handheld versions following later.

Strange conversion of the month came from Ubisoft for belatedly converting the old Amstrad-only game *Zombi* onto the Spectrum, C64, Amiga and ST. The icon-driven arcade adventure was often quoted as being loosely based on the George A Romero zombie movie *Dawn Of The Dead*. For 'loosely based on', read 'virtually identical to'…

In what must be one of the first true survival horror games, you control four people whose helicopter just manages to land on the roof of a zombie-infested shopping mall. You must battle your way through the undead to find fuel and food then get back to your chopper safely for a swift escape. Unfortunately, as atmospheric and playable as *Zombi* was, it remained overlooked by many gamers.

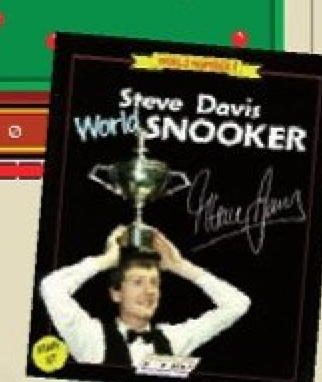
Incentive had once again used its Freescape engine to great effect by releasing a sequel to *Total Eclipse*. However, the Egyptian-themed game, *Sphinx Jinx: Total Eclipse 2*, would have a very restricted target audience. It was originally commissioned by WH Smith, owner of the Home Computer Club mail order company,

» [Spectrum] Activision once again had the *Ghostbusters* licence but the sequel, like the film, would never live up to the original.



» [Atari ST] When the pink is covered by the red, go for the brown with lots of screw-back and plenty of chalk.





as a special edition to be distributed exclusively through the club with the original *Total Eclipse* game. As good as *Sphinx Jinx* was, the restricted release meant very few bought it.

Activision had news of a licensing deal to produce the game for the forthcoming *Ghostbusters II* movie. If it sold anything like the game that it produced for the original *Ghostbusters* movie, Activision would be a very happy bunny.

The *Computer & Video Games* reviewers had once again chewed over the new releases for this month, with Amiga and PC Engine gamers particularly spoilt for choice. Among the top rating games were *Populous* (Electronic Arts, Amiga), *Denaris* (US Gold, Amiga), *Vindicators* (Domark, Amstrad), *Sword Of Sodan* (Discovery Software, Amiga), *Space Harrier* (Elite, Amiga), *Hybrids* (Discovery Software, Amiga), *Leisure Suit Larry 2* (Sierra On-Line/Activision, Atari ST), *Gradius* (Nintendo, NES), *Space Harrier* (NEC, PC Engine), *Vigilante* (NEC, PC Engine) and *Dragon Spirit* (Namco, PC Engine).

THIS MONTH IN…

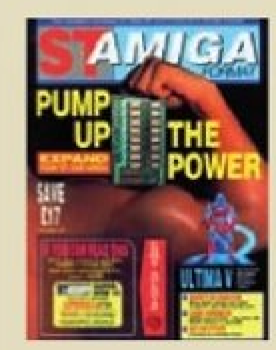
THE GAMES MACHINE



With news of the development of Nintendo's SNES console well under way in Japan, *Games Machine* focused on how it would fare against the recently released Sega Mega Drive. The verdict? "Nintendo look set to bury Sega again." Ouch.



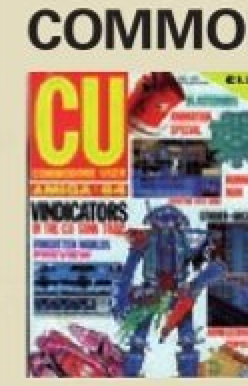
ST/AMIGA FORMAT



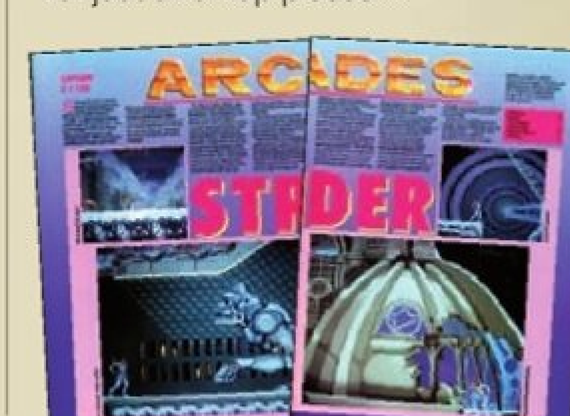
This month saw an interview with Ocean's in-house musician, Jonathan Dunn, who revealed that programmers weren't always appreciative. Recalling his time on *Run The Gauntlet*, a programmer's response was: "Bloody hell, that's bloody awful."



COMMODORE USER



Receiving very favourable reviews was a new arcade game from Capcom. *Strider* sees an agile ninja with a plasma sword taking on beautiful bosses during his quest to assassinate Grandmaster Meio. Superb gaming for just two 10p pieces…

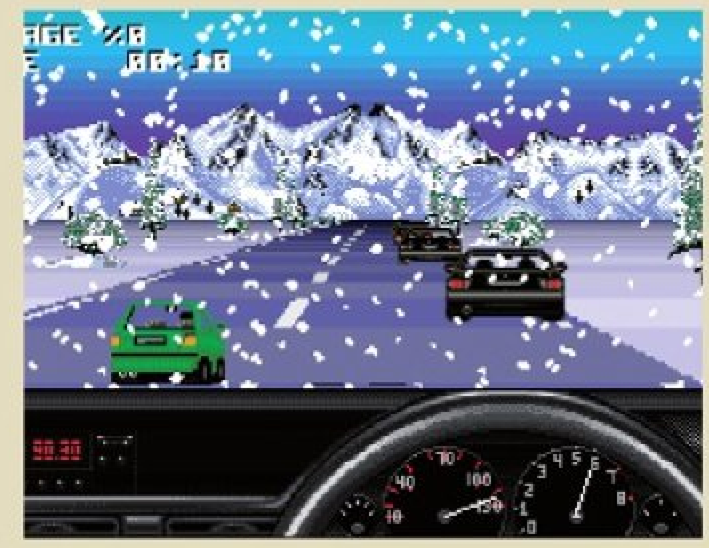


BACK TO THE NINETIES



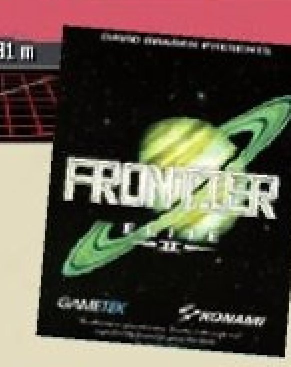
» [SNES] There was nothing quite as bizarre as the inspired lunacy of *Ren & Stimpy*. The game re-created that sentiment well.

» [Amiga] A terrific racer that seems only to be remembered for being the pack-in game for the ill-fated Amstrad GX4000.



» [PC] *Frontier* was here and was everything fans of the original *Elite* wanted plus some…







THE LATEST NEWS FROM OCTOBER 1993

OCTOBER 1993 – Impossible Mission returns, Uridium returns, Elite returns and Chuck Rock returns. Aero The Acro-Bat debuts while there's Happy Happy Joy Joy for Ren & Stimpy. Richard Burton takes a trip to Belly Button World…

When Epyx released *Impossible Mission* on the C64 way back in 1984, the game became an instant classic and is still held up as a fine example of early Eighties gaming. Fast-forward to October 1993 and MicroProse was ready to release *Impossible Mission 2025: The Special Edition* on the Amiga and CD32. A SNES version was proposed and completed but strangely failed to materialise.

The new game was an enhanced conversion of the C64 original that everyone knew and loved, and as an added bonus MicroProse included an accurate rendition of this as part of the package for Amiga owners. Whether the anticipation of the game was too great or just because the C64 game was unsurpassable in gameplay terms, the new version of *Impossible Mission* never really hit the target. It was a fair game in its own right but when held up against the original, there was no contest.

Another C64 classic being treated to a makeover for the Amiga was *Uridium*, the shoot-'em-up from Andrew Braybrook and Graftgold. Thankfully they would also be responsible for developing the sequel. Early press reports stated that *Uridium 2* was looking great and progressing well, with Graftgold confirming that it hoped for *Uridium 2* to be completed and available for the forthcoming Christmas sales period. Thankfully the combination of stunning graphics and fantastic playability had continued from the C64 iteration to the Amiga sequel. The only real disappointment was that it remained an Amiga-only release.

And continuing with the sequel theme, David Braben, one half of the brains behind *Elite*, announced that *Frontier: Elite II* was finished and to be released this month. Due out on the Atari ST, Amiga and PC and published by GameTek and Konami, *Frontier* promised enhancements to the original *Elite* experience with the inclusion of textured graphics and the ability to change your spacecraft and land on planets.

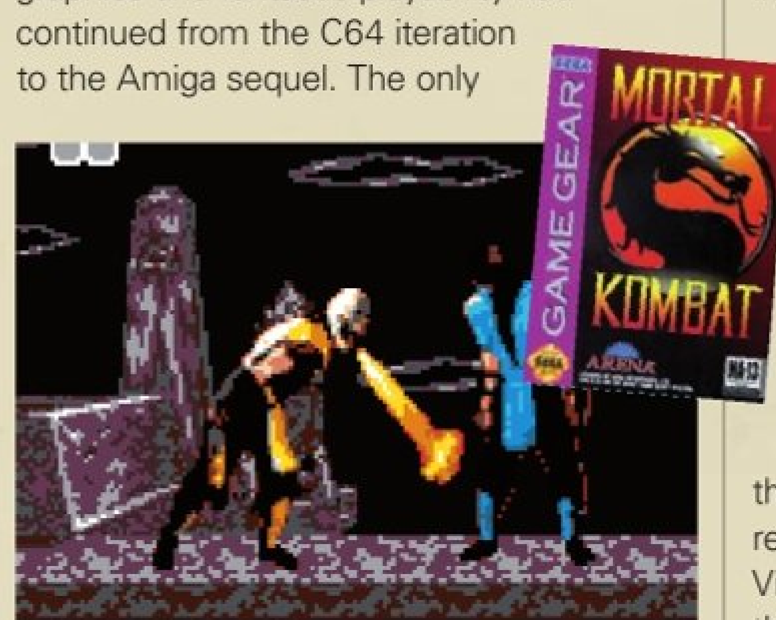
The *Frontier* universe was mind-bogglingly massive but avoided monotony through the added realism from the precise star maps incorporated into the game. This included a faithful simulation of our own galaxy, as well as accurate planet orbits.

While the *Elite* hardcore crowd was always going to love *Frontier*, newer gamers were also drawn in with *Frontier*'s graphics and playability. There were criticisms of a lack of action, but this didn't hamper sales, with around 500,000 copies being sold. Stick that in your gravitational pull and smoke it.

There was some Master System love this month with news of several new releases for the Mega Drive's older brother. Virgin Games released its hit platform game, the *Chuck Rock* sequel *Son Of Chuck*; while US Gold and Lucasfilm had a new *Star Wars* game due out imminently, which



» [Amiga] Lovely graphics with slick scrolling ensure that the sequel to the fabulous *Uridium* is just as good.



» [Game Gear] Scorpion finishes Sub-Zero with projectile vomit. Not nice and leaves a nasty smell…

OCTOBER 1993 NEWS

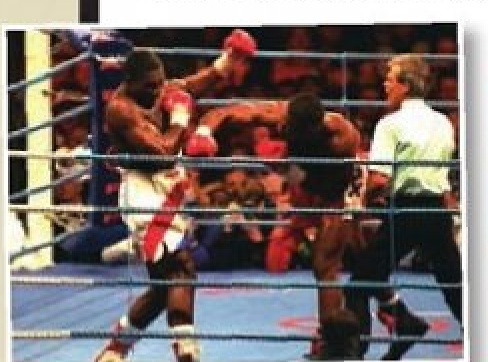


» Danny Elfman, composer on many Tim Burton movies, was the singing voice of Jack Skellington.

The 'Battle Of Britain', the first time two British boxers had challenged for the WBC heavyweight title, took place on 1 October. Lennox Lewis, the reigning champion, took on Frank Bruno, who was fighting in his third world title bout. The fight took placed at Cardiff Arms Park in Wales and ended with Lewis defeating Bruno in the seventh round on a technical knockout.

The fight card was also notable for all-conquering Welsh boxer, Joe Calzaghe, making his professional debut. He beat Paul Hanlon in the first by technical knockout.

An IRA bomb attack on a fish and chip shop in Belfast on 23 October led to nine dead, including four women and two girls. The bomb was intended for the members of the Ulster Freedom Fighters, whose headquarters were situated above the shop. The timing device on the bomb malfunctioned, causing it to explode prematurely. The IRA apologised for the deaths, citing the faulty timer for not giving them the opportunity to give the customary warning to evacuate civilians from the scene.



» Frank Bruno is beaten around the ring by Lennox Lewis. Elite Systems wouldn't be making a game out of this one…

With Christmas coming, 9 October saw the world premiere of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, the stop-motion movie telling the tale of Jack Skellington, who gets bored of Halloween and wants to have a bash at doing Christmas instead.

followed the original movie very closely. It also created a special Game Gear version to suit the smaller screen size, with both versions rating highly in reviews.

Acclaim had followed suit with a Game Gear version of *Mortal Kombat*. The one-player game allowed only a choice of six characters but would feature the splashes of crimson and death moves that made it so infamous. Sadly, it never really engaged gamers like the Mega Drive version did.

Here we go again… Surely not another platform game attempting to create a money-spinning cutesy gaming mascot with one eye firmly planted on the bottom line rather than gaming quality? Sadly yes. Ready for release by Sunsoft was *Aero The Acro-Bat*. This performing bat is suspicious when his circus comes under threat from an industrialist, and so Aero has to save the day and rescue the Big Top from being sabotaged into closure and turned into factory space. *Aero* was released on the Mega Drive and SNES, and while it contained undeniably beautifully crafted graphics, gameplay was sadly dull and unremarkable.

Another side-scrolling platform adventure that was ready for release and that was more bizarre than beautiful was THQ's rendition of the cartoon cat and dog pairing of *Ren & Stimpy* in the game *Veediots!*.





» [Amiga] While a great game in its own right, it couldn't touch the playability of the C64 original.

Re-creating four classic episodes from the cartoon TV series, the levels were designed to be as downright odd as possible. The first level, entitled The Boy Who Cried Rat, would see Ren attempting to survive inside Stimpy's mouth while avoiding the deadly Tooth Beaver… and it didn't get any less strange as you progressed through the game.

Purveyors of weirdness loved it; others took it with an extra large pinch of salt. Although *Veediots!* was only released on the SNES initially, with a Game Boy version appearing later, the franchise produced several more games over the coming years.

Amiga Power cast an eye over the new crop of Amiga releases, with *Micro Machines* (Codemasters), *Diggers* (Millennium), *Burning Rubber* (Ocean), *Overkill* (Digisoft), *Hired Guns* (DMA Design), *Dogfight* (MicroProse), *Morph* (Millennium), *Loom* (Kixx XL) and *Toki* (The Hit Squad) all smelling of roses.

Mean Machines Sega's favourites included *Slipheed* (Game Arts, Mega-CD), *Chuck Rock II: Son Of Chuck* (Core Design, Game Gear and Master System), *Blaster Master 2* (Sunsoft, Mega Drive), *Wiz 'N' Liz* (Psygnosis, Mega Drive), *Gunstar Heroes* (Sega, Mega Drive), *Powerstrike* (Sega, Master System), *Puggsy* (Psygnosis, Mega Drive), *The Flash* (Sega, Master System), *Aerobix* (Koei, Mega Drive), *Super Off Road* (Virgin, Master System), *Haunting Starring Polterguy* (Electronic Arts, Mega Drive) and *Landstalker* (Sega, Mega Drive).

THIS MONTH IN…

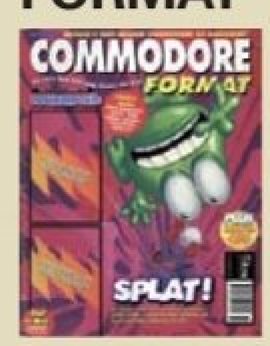
SUPER PLAY



To highlight the popularity of the SNES, *Super Play* interviewed Jane Shipperley, head of the Nintendo Hotline, where struggling gamers got in touch for hints and tips. Judging by the figures quoted it was in demand, with approximately 20,000 calls per day.



COMMODORE FORMAT



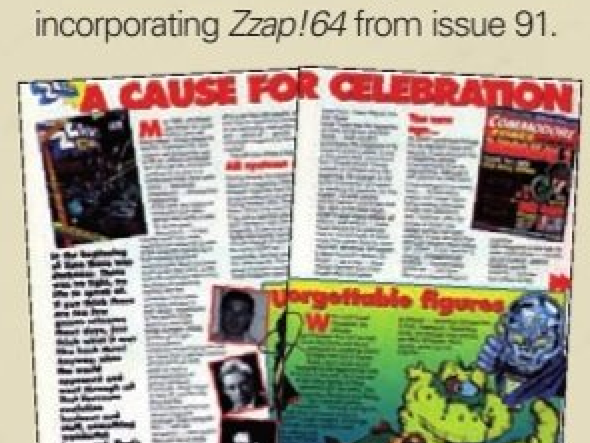
The final instalment of *Mayhem In Monsterland* was published this month, with the game virtually complete. It had taken John and Steve Rowlands over a year to complete, but their attention to detail would prove to make *Mayhem* a hugely popular game.



COMMODORE FORCE

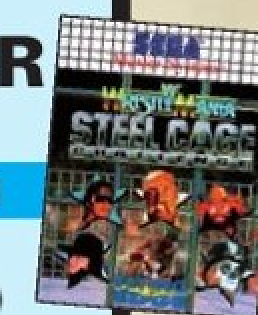


It was a time for celebration as *Commodore Force* reached its centenary issue. For 90 issues of that run, *CF* was *Zzap!64*. Alas, changing times resulted in *Commodore Force* being created and incorporating *Zzap!64* from issue 91.



CHARTS

OCTOBER 1993



MASTER SYSTEM

1. WWF Steel Cage Challenge (Acclaim)
2. Land Of Illusion Starring Mickey Mouse (Sega)
3. Tecmo World Cup '93 (Sega)
4. Lemmings (Sega)
5. Taz-Mania (Sega)



SNES

1. Starwing (Nintendo)
2. Alien 3 (LJN)
3. Tiny Toons Adventures: Buster Busts Loose (Konami)
4. Super Star Wars (JVC)
5. Super Mario Kart (Nintendo)

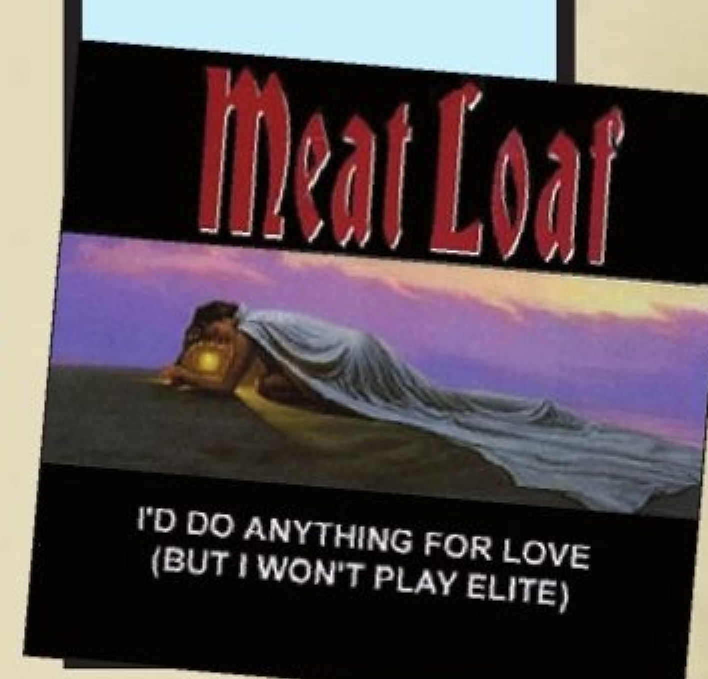


MEGA DRIVE

1. Micro Machines (Codemasters)
2. Cool Spot (Virgin Games)
3. Flashback (US Gold)
4. PGA Tour Golf 2 (Electronic Arts)
5. Tiny Toons Adventures: Buster's Hidden Treasure (Konami)

MUSIC

1. I'd Do Anything For Love (But I Won't Do That) (Meat Loaf)
2. Relight My Fire (Take That)
3. Boom! Shake The Room (Jazzy Jeff & Fresh Prince)
4. Moving On Up (M People)
5. Stay (Eternal)



Retro GAMER.net READER'S REVIVAL

Coca-Cola Kid

WE WON'T BOW TO ANY SPONSOR

#35



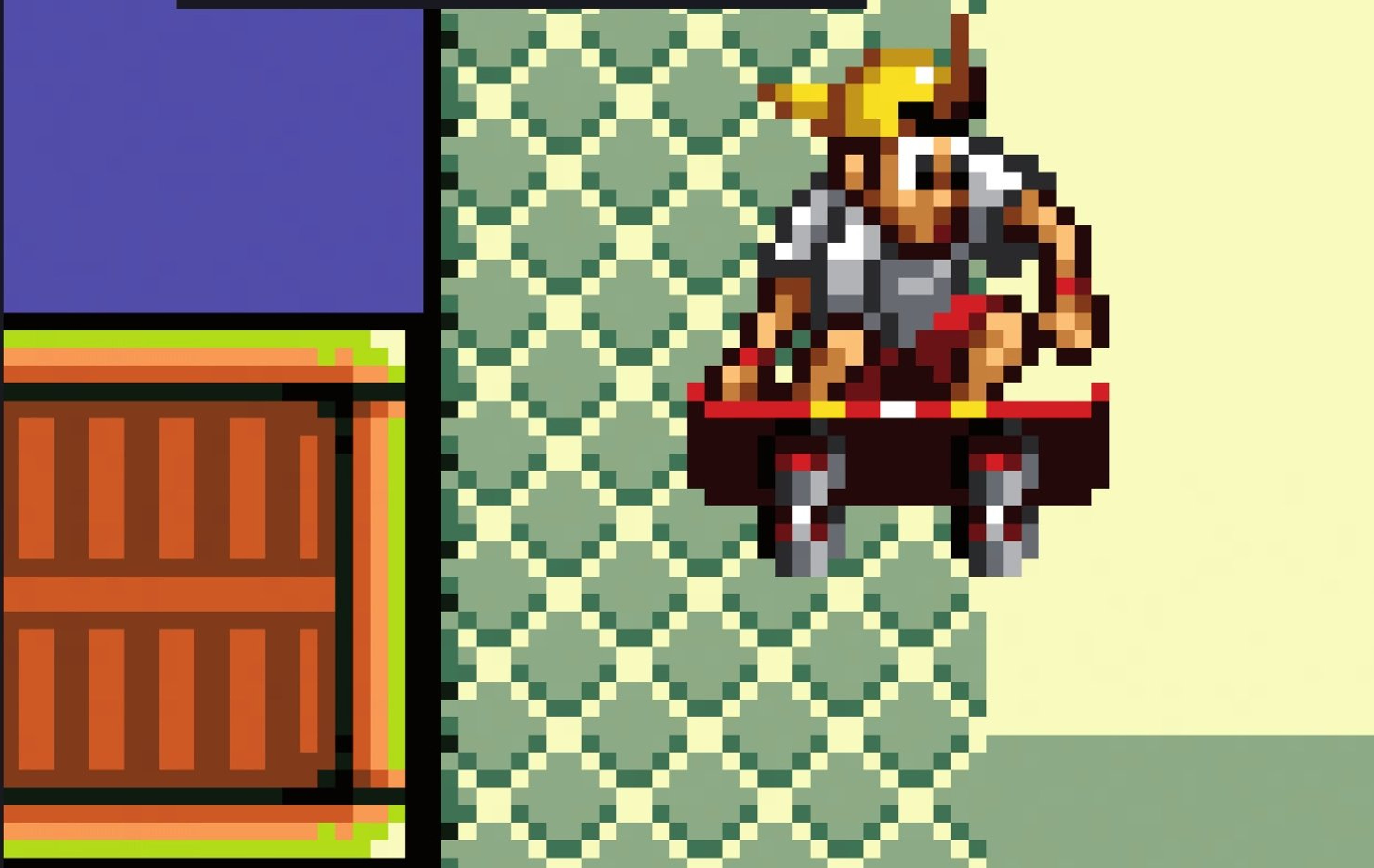
» GAME GEAR
» ASPECT
» 1994

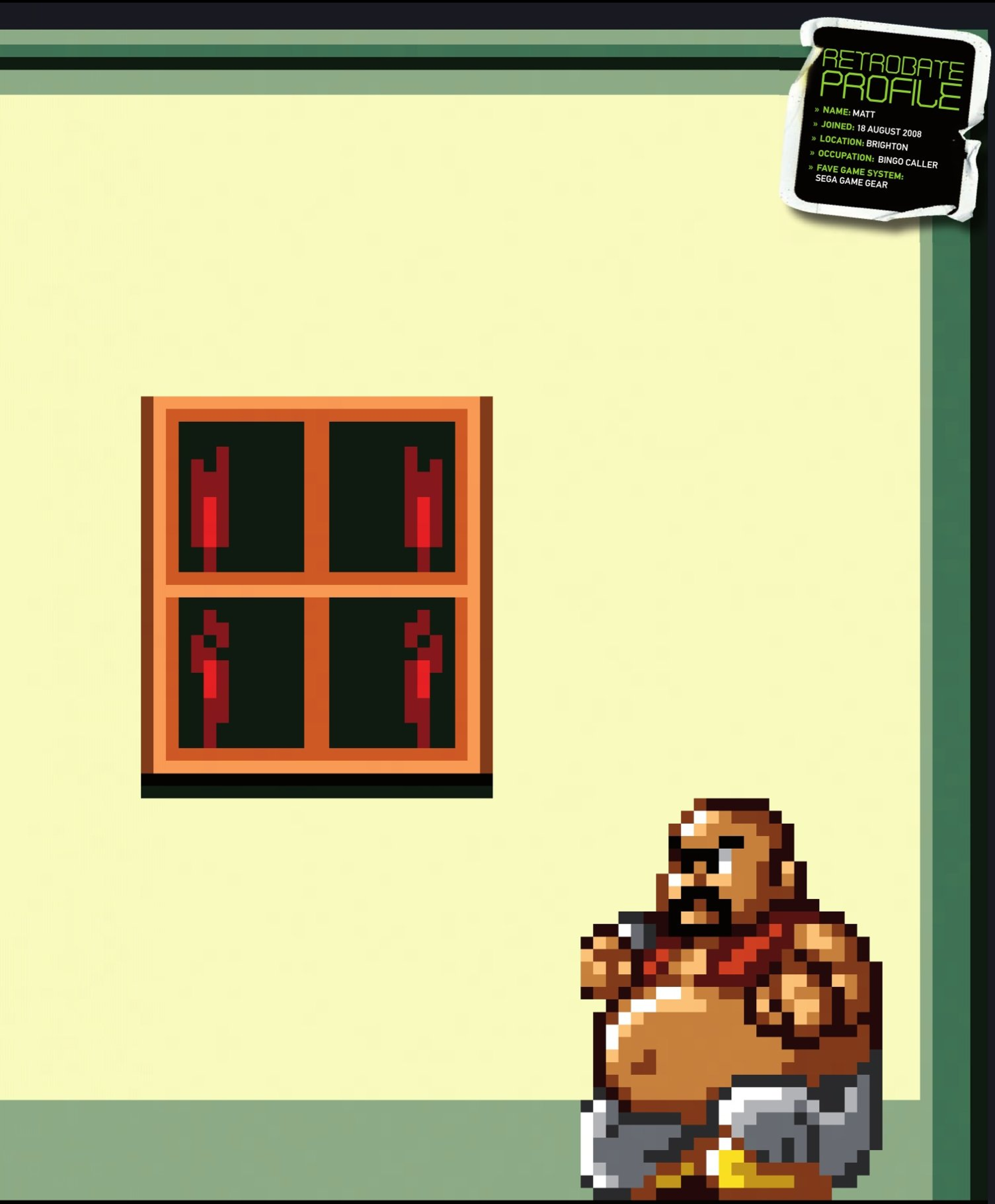
Just about every format ever released has games that were only available in certain countries, but I think the humble Game Gear suffered particularly badly. I'm not just talking about US sports games and obscure Japanese RPGs, but games like *Mega Man*, *Gunstar Heroes*, *Jungle Strike*, *Pac-Man*, *Bubble Bobble*, *Chase HQ* and countless Marvel comic book tie-ins. *Coca-Cola Kid* is a vibrant platformer, and another game that didn't make it to Europe, although it's not just our loss – it didn't make it to the American market either.

This is strange for a couple of reasons. Firstly, it's not as if the license doesn't hold universal appeal. Secondly, it was developed by Aspect – the guys behind nearly all of Sonic's 8-bit adventures.

As such, it bears a lot of resemblance to *Sonic – Sonic Chaos*, to be exact; the music and presentation is almost identical, while some of the sound effects have clearly been recycled. Because of the text being in Japanese I don't fully understand the plot, but the main character – a guy wearing shorts and a yellow baseball cap – has to fight several kung fu masters as the game progresses. As well as being able to kick, the lead character can power-slide along the floor, wall-jump and perform a charge attack. There are also skateboards dotted around the levels, although the game moves so quickly that it's hard to stay on them for more than a few seconds.

Sega obviously knew that it had a hit on their hands with this one, as it was bundled with a limited edition red Sega Game Gear, which sells for a pretty penny on eBay. Fortunately though, the game itself can be picked up for just a few quid whenever it turns up. ✱





RETROBATE PROFILE

» **NAME:** MATT
» **JOINED:** 18 AUGUST 2008
» **LOCATION:** BRIGHTON
» **OCCUPATION:** BINGO CALLER
» **FAVE GAME SYSTEM:** SEGA GAME GEAR

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The Collector's Guide







In a brand new series, Mat Allan and RetroCollect's Adam Buchanan explain why Nintendo's N64 is becoming an extremely desirable console to collect for

NINTE



» **Manufacturer:** Nintendo » **Model:** Nintendo 64 » **Launched:** 1996 » **Country of Origin:** Japan

ENDO 64

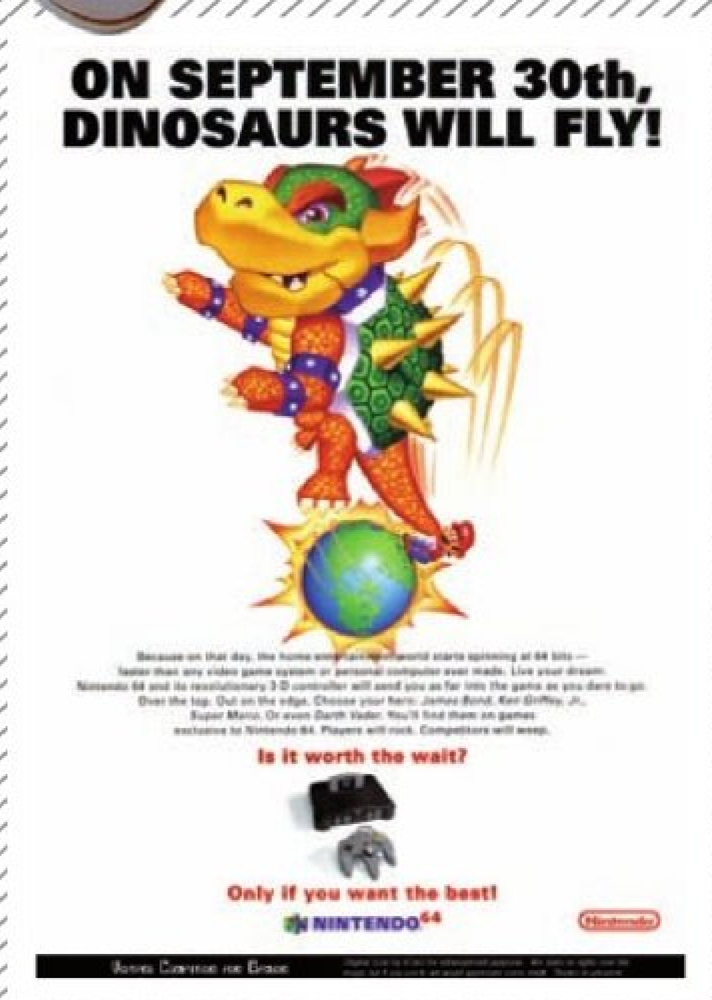
The Collector's Guide

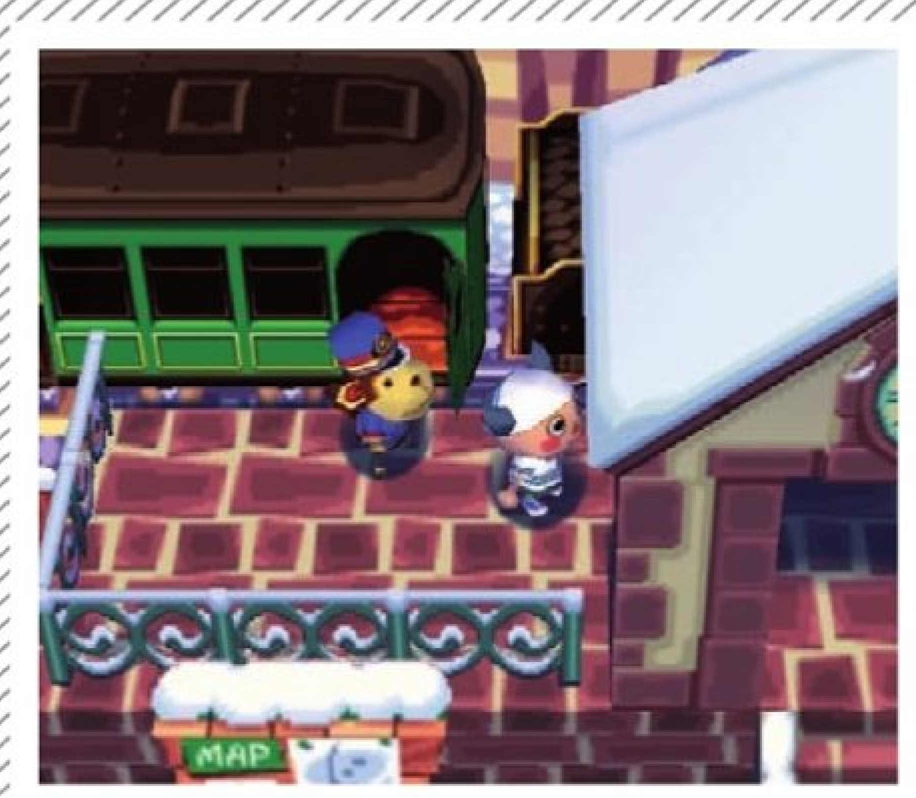


» [Above] There is a huge range of different joypad colours. This all-gold version tied in with the release of Rare's *GoldenEye 007*.



» [Above] RGB scart annoyingly wasn't included on the N64. A mod does exist, but it only works on U.S. and Japanese consoles and a certain French model.





» [N64] It may be massively popular now, but *Animal Crossing's* beginnings were very humble. The original N64 game wasn't even released outside of Japan.



WHY IT'S COLLECTABLE

The Nintendo 64 is home to some truly groundbreaking titles such as *Super Mario 64*, a pioneering platformer that opened the doors to many 3D adventures to come, along with *Conker's Bad Fur Day*, a title from Rare that shook the politically correct foundations of gaming as we knew them. But what about the other side to the Nintendo 64? We all know what its best games are, but what about the most collectible, rarest and most desirable games?

Many undiscovered and rare items can be found within the Nintendo 64 library, which are often the centrepiece of a tussle between collectors. For a system with only 242 games released in PAL regions, it is also a decent starting point for new collectors.

Nintendo opted against using optical media for the N64, which ultimately lost the company its long-standing connection with the *Final Fantasy* series. But in reality it also gained it a fair few fans many years later, fans which Nintendo may have never considered back then. Where collectors are concerned, the majority of CDs haven't survived the transition from new to used as well as they hoped. The poor design of the Sega Saturn cases (which left countless discs to ruin) and the cracked cases of Sony PlayStation games often prohibits collectors from a quick purchase. Games released for the Nintendo 64, however, remain an easy and reliable acquisition due to their robust and reliable shape. With every game sat in a desirable and aesthetic curved cartridge, the form factor of the Nintendo 64 was always more polished than the other consoles on the market at the time.

While these cartridges may have survived a good decade and potentially many more to come, their packaging often remains in a much different state. Just like every other console released under the Nintendo brand before the N64, the games for the system were packaged in gorgeous yet flimsy cardboard boxes. Over the years, the inevitable arrival of accidental and storage damage is often seen with Nintendo boxes. Something you would expect to send collectors away, when in fact it does quite the opposite.

The quest to find Nintendo games in good condition is often a driving factor for many N64 collectors. The fight against a clumsy mail service, poor packaging, sticker residue and more importantly time, makes the hunt just as entertaining as the games themselves. With many collectors now fighting this battle together, a real rise in the value of N64 games has begun to show, as many collectors challenge themselves to find games that could be mistaken for being brand new.

However, it should be noted that it isn't just the packaging and aesthetic value of the Nintendo 64 which drives collectors. The variety and wealth of enjoyable titles on the Nintendo 64 makes it all the more worthwhile collecting them, often more so than other consoles available. Alongside the obvious and desirable games, hard-to-find titles like *Aidyn Chronicles* and *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys* are finding their way into gamers' collections for the very first time. The rarity and obscurity of these previously





» eBay sales might dictate otherwise, but the Pal version of *Paper Mario* isn't actually that hard to find. It's just pricey.

DID YOU KNOW?

■ A large number of N64 games were only released as rentals in chains like Blockbuster. As a result, they're very desireable due to their rarity and the fact that many of them are often incomplete, as stores would often just rent out cartridges. Rental-only games include *Indiana Jones And The Infernal Machine, Razor Freestyle Scooter, NFL Blitz Special Edition* and the highly rare (especially in complete condition) *Clayfighter 63 1/3: Sculpter's Cut.*



» Just a small section of games from Janne Kaitila's impressive N64 and N64DD collection. He's been collecting seriously for around five years and has amassed 394 games.



» Certain websites like NTSC-UK.com feature collectors who collect N64 games in the order they were originally released, using old magazines as useful play guides.

little-known N64 games comes as a real bonus to new collectors seeking new experiences.

As we all know, Nintendo is no stranger to new iterations of its hardware. With countless versions of the Game Boy available, it came as no surprise when Nintendo began to release variations of the Nintendo 64. Enticing bundles began to arrive such as the *GoldenEye 007* set including a golden control pad and the *Pokémon Stadium* set featuring a *Pokémon* VHS tape and branded console. It goes without saying that these often take centre-stage in a fully-fledged eBay bidding war, but the real collectors often have their eyes set on a more attractive set of consoles. Released late in the life of the Nintendo 64, semi-transparent consoles began to appear on the shelves in a vast range of colours. Out of the bunch, the two-tone clear blue and white console is often found sitting at the top of collectors' want lists, as its exquisite appearance and unforgettable rarity go hand in hand.

Putting official releases aside, even the pirates had a good thing going on the N64. Devices such as *Mr Backup Z64* brought to the N64 the ability to backup cartridges onto Zip disks (or a hard drive with a bit of modification) alongside the *V64 Jr,* which offered a similar approach via a parallel port on a PC. Coming from an 'unofficial' background, and with few places to purchase them from, these backup units sold in very small quantities. Taking into consideration the added functionality these devices offer, along with their elusive nature, they're inevitably the subject of a long line of collectors stepping up to fight for the winning bid on every unit that comes under the hammer.

Last but not least, even the gamers who tend to prefer their games arriving from abroad have more than enough to shout about. On offer lies a rather small yet quaint catalogue of many import-friendly titles constantly changing hands. With heavy-hitting titles *Tsumi To Batsu: Hoshi No Keishousha* (also known as *Sin & Punishment*) and *Bakuretsu Muteki Bangai-O* amongst the pickings, the Japanese auction sites have grown tired of foreign competition for their own treasures.

With all these collecting tips in mind, it should be obvious by now why the Nintendo 64 is so highly regarded. However, this reputation goes much further than the packaging and desire of each title, right down to the sheer quality of games created by Nintendo for its 64-bit system. Titles such as *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina Of Time* and *Paper Mario* to this day hold many top spots on lists of the greatest games of all time, often accompanied by the likes of *GoldenEye 007, Super Smash Bros.* and *Mario Kart 64*. With such a strong selection on offer, the already rising value and competition of individual titles is only heightened by the playability of the system as a whole.

So the next time you place a recent Nintendo 64 purchase into your collection, take a minute to step back and remind yourself of the potential collection you soon could be housing. With countless console variations of equal worth, a huge back-catalogue of fantastic games and a library of rare treasures to be had, there has never been a better time to get into collecting for the Nintendo 64.

THE PERIPHERALS



» **A number of** games were cancelled **for the 64DD**, including *Cubivore: Survival Of The Fittest*, *Earthbound 64* and *SimCopter*.

THE 64DD UNIT

The 64DD (Dynamic Drive) unit, on the surface, appeared to be a strategic decision for Nintendo, in light of the exterior add-ons available for its previous two consoles: the FDS for the Famicom and the Satellaview for the Super Famicom. In Japan, at least. The reality was a lot less smooth. First announced in 1995, it took Nintendo another four years to finally release the unit. Anticipating low sales from the off, the unit wasn't even initially sold via retailers, but as part of a year-long subscription service that guaranteed an online connection (via RANDnet) and availability of software.

Specifications-wise, the 64DD did have potential. Many games in the early days of N64 development were planned to either be sold for or interact with the unit. Gamers drooled at the prospect of a more expansive *Zelda* than was ever thought possible on cartridge, or the ability to dynamically alter worlds depending on choices made during the game. The rewritable aspect of the media opened the possibility of countless customisation, real-time updating, and hopes of establishing another form of cheap mass storage, essential to compete with the CDs being used by the Sony PlayStation.

Whatever the reasons Nintendo had for delaying the unit, it caused irreversible damage to development and the cancellation of most projects assigned to it. Some of the games ended up on normal cartridge (*Ocarina Of Time*, *Hybrid Heaven*, *Paper Mario*, *Ogre Battle 64*), but the rest disappeared, including games such as *Cabbage*, *Jungle Emperor Leo* and *Dezaemon DD*, together with all add-on disks bar the *F-Zero* kit.

To date, only two other games are known to still have the 'hook' programming within their code to access the 64DD unit during play. *Ocarina Of Time* is the more well known, given hackers split the code apart and discovered when the game would have looked for new data from the 64DD. Thankfully, that project was one that was finally released in the form of the Master Quest on the first promotional *Zelda* Gamecube disc. The other is *Mario Party,* suggesting Hudson planned to release expansions on disk but they ended up as seperate cartridges instead.

The unit itself was made available from December 1999, although the actual online RANDnet service didn't begin until February 2000. Subscribers had the ability to order future software through the service, which was the only way to acquire it, chat to other users, swap scores, play demos and browse the internet. By the end of 2000, however, Nintendo cancelled the project, and in March 2001 the online service was stopped completely. In effect, the 64DD unit had a lifespan of only twelve months.

Discounting the RANDnet access disk itself, there were only nine pieces of software released for the unit in that year. For the most part they are not tricky to track down, although the last two programs, *Kyojin No Doshin: Kaihou Sensen Chibikko Chikko Daishuugou* and *Japan Pro Tour Golf 64* are hard to find by virtue of their lateness, the aforementioned online-only availability and a low print run (3,000) of each.

...AND THE REST



01. Keyboard

■ The keyboard was designed and supported only via the RANDnet service with the N64DD unit, allowing members to properly type emails and messages to other users without having to rely on a convoluted and frustrating on-screen input system. Ergonomically it looks much like a PC (rōmaji) keyboard but with added symbol functionality.

02. Rumble Pak

■ The Rumble Pak was bundled with *Starfox 64* (or *Lylat Wars* in Europe) and then sold separately a few months later. Arguably the inspiration for rumble being included inside controllers since, it was supported by a staggering amount of games, although only a few of them (such as *Ocarina Of Time*) actually used it for specific gameplay functionality.

03. Expansion Pak

■ Initially bundled with *Donkey Kong 64* (and, in Japan, *Majora's Mask* and *Perfect Dark*) along with the 64DD unit itself, the Expansion Pak increased the memory of the N64 from 4MB to 8MB. While the aforementioned three games were the only titles that required the extra memory to function, many other titles supported it to provide either higher resolutions or better quality textures.

04. Bio Sensor

■ The Bio Sensor was a Japan-only device designed to interact with *Tetris 64*, where one end plugged into the controller and the other clipped onto the player's ear. While the game delivered the expected *Tetris* experience, one mode sped up or slowed down the action based upon the player's heart rate. Limited for sure, but a curiosity nonetheless.

05. Hori controllers

■ While these Hori controllers are for the N64, it is curious to note they share a number of characteristics with the Gamecube controller. Released in 2000, evidently Hori must have been privy to some of Nintendo's upcoming design ideas and used them accordingly. Available in a range of colours, they are quite ergonomic and highly sought after.

06. Transfer Pak

■ The Transfer Pak plugged into the controller and enabled the N64 to transfer data between Game Boy cartridges and compatible N64 titles. While likely created for *Pokémon* players to transfer and compete using their Game Boy rosters in *Pokémon Stadium*, it was also useful for importing user created players into *Mario Golf* and *Mario Tennis*.

07. Import Adaptor

■ Due to the N64 having so many great games that weren't released on PAL, it makes sense to own an import adaptor. The Passport 3 Adaptor is one of the best due to its high compatability with so many essential games, but the one we've featured here is also worth considering.

The Collector's Guide

TOP 5 GAMES TO PLAY



01. Super Mario 64
■ Setting the 3D platformer standard for many, many years to come while offering hours of gameplay, *Super Mario 64* should be the first game to arrive in any Nintendo 64 collection.



02. The Legend of Zelda Ocarina of Time
■ Often referred to as the greatest adventure game of all time, *Ocarina Of Time* has won many gamers over and put the *Zelda* series into the limelight for a lifetime.



03. GoldenEye 007
■ While it hasn't aged gracefully, Rare's first-person shooter *GoldenEye 007* holds many special memories for N64 gamers and has plenty to offer for newcomers.



04. Mario Kart 64
■ Picking up from where the Super Nintendo classic left off, *Mario Kart 64* is easily the best four-player party game around, offering hours of friendship-breaking gameplay.



05. Super Smash Bros.
■ Ever wondered who would win in a battle between Pikachu, Samus and Link? An amusing four-player brawler, *Super Smash Bros.* leaves no room for niceties between friends.

PLAY THESE NEXT



Banjo-Kazooie



International Superstar Soccer 98



Pilotwings 64



Blast Corps



F-Zero X



Conker's Bad Fur Day



Perfect Dark



Space Station Silicon Valley



Excitebike 64



Pokémon Snap

TOP 5 IMPORT GAMES



01. Susume! Taisen Puzzle Dama Toukon! Marumata Chou
■ Get ready for a Konami's quirky cross between *Puyo Puyo* and *Columns*. Match three or more to start chain combos in this great two-player puzzler. Highly recommended.

02. Ogre Battle 64: Person of Lordly Caliber
■ Although it has been available on the Virtual Console for some time, the original US version of this cult SRPG continues to climb in price.

03. Harvest Moon 64
■ The follow up to the popular SNES game never appeared in the UK, so if you want an English language version you're going to have to have deep pockets and look abroad.

04. Bakuretsu Muteki Bangai-O
■ One of Treasure's finest on the system is also one of the most expensive. This addictive shooter will set you back a fair amount if found in good condition.

05. Tsumi to Batsu – Hoshi no Keishousha (Sin & Punishment)
■ The cream of the crop and easily the most desirable title from the import Nintendo 64 library. On-rails shooter *Sin & Punishment* is a genuine treasure worthy of a space in any games collection.

IMPORT THESE NEXT


Nightmare Creatures


Asteroids Hyper 64



Fighter Destiny 2


Razor Freestyle Scooter


Star Soldier: Vanishing Earth


PD Ultraman Battle Collection 64



Dance Dance Revolution Disney Dancing Museum


Dobutsu No Mori


Neon Genesis Evangelion



Goemon: Mononoke Sugoroku

The Collector's Guide

TOP 5 RAREST PAL GAMES



01. Airboarder 64

■ Attempting to muscle in on Tony Hawk's territory, *Airboarder 64* is a mediocre futuristic boarding game with little to offer other than its impressive rarity.

02. Hercules: The Legendary Journeys*

■ This lacklustre attempt to steal *Zelda*'s spotlight went pretty much unnoticed, as Titus' adventure game *Hercules* is nothing but an unplayable mess. Sadly, what doesn't sell well becomes rare.

03. Major League Baseball Featuring Ken Griffey Jr*

■ To the majority of European audiences, Baseball is an American sport. The Australians, however, would disagree, as would their PAL-exclusive Baseball release for the Nintendo 64.

04. Snowboard Kids 2*

■ Regardless of the popularity of the first *Snowboard Kids* game, the sequel remains almost unheard of, and in terms of PAL regions exclusively released in Australia.

05. Starcraft 64*

■ *Starcraft* made its way onto the N64 in 2000, but remained exclusive to Australia and North America. Its rarity and very high price tag will no doubt send you looking for the PC version instead.

GET THESE NEXT



Aidyn Chronicles: The First Mage



Gex 3: Deep Cover Gecko



Knockout Kings 2000



Off Road Challenge



AeroFighters Assault



Rocket – Robot On Wheels



Blues Brothers 2000



BattleTanx: Global Assault



Mortal Kombat Mythologies: Sub Zero



HSV Adventure Racing

* These US versions are easier and cheaper to secure than their Pal counterparts



THE JEWEL IN THE CROWN

Every system has a game that all collectors would love to own no matter its cost. This month, we examine the lavish Majora's Mask Limited Edition Adventure Set





The Watch

■ Considering that *The Legend Of Zelda: Majora's Mask* deals with time travel, it should come as no surprise to learn that a watch was included with this limited edition pack. The watch was only released with the box set, so just 1,000 exist.



The CD

■ The music of *Majora's Mask* is incredibly ambitious in scope – so much, in fact, that it needed to be crammed onto two CDs. Although it contains no additional tracks, it does feature a totally different cover to the commercial release.



The T-Shirt

■ A high-quality T-Shirt finishes off the Limited Edition Adventure Set. Featuring the logo that adorns the original box, it's a fitting addition to the box set and rounds off an impressive package. Just be aware that it's only available in size Large.

Special thanks to Janne Kaitila for giving us access to his collection and to Jan Baart, Lasse Erkola and the members of NTSC-UK.com and 64dd.net

The Collector's Guide

THE COMPLETE CHECK LIST OF PAL N64 GAMES*

VERY RARE

- Aidyn Chronicles: The First Mage
- Airboarder 64
- BattleTanx: Global Assault
- Fighting Force 64
- Gex 3: Deep Cover Gecko
- Hercules: The Legendary Journeys
- Knockout Kings 2000
- Madden NFL 99
- Major League Baseball Featuring Ken Griffey Jr
- Mortal Kombat Mythologies: Sub-Zero
- NBA Pro 99
- NFL Quarterback Club 2000
- Off Road Challenge
- Resident Evil 2
- Rocket: Robot On Wheels
- San Francisco Rush 2049
- Snowboard Kids 2
- Starcraft 64
- Top Gear: Hyper Bike

RARE

- Aerofighters Assault
- Blues Brothers 2000
- Centre Court Tennis
- Chameleon Twist 2
- Charlie Blast's Territory
- Conker's Bad Fur Day
- Destruction Derby 64
- F1 Racing Championship
- Flying Dragon
- Gauntlet Legends
- Hexen
- Hydro Thunder
- International Superstar Soccer 2000
- Kirby 64: The Crystal Shards
- Milo's Astro Lanes
- Mortal Kombat Trilogy



RakugaKids

- Mystical Ninja 2 starring Goemon
- NBA in the Zone 2000
- NBA Jam 99
- NBA Jam 2000
- NBA Live 99
- NBA Live 2000
- NBA Pro 98
- NFL Quarterback Club 99
- NHL 99
- NHL Breakaway 98
- NHL Breakaway 99
- NHL Pro 99
- Nuclear Strike 64
- Olympic Hockey 98
- Penny Racers
- PGA European Tour
- Power Rangers (Saban's): Lightspeed Rescue
- Racing Simulation 2
- RakugaKids
- Rampage 2: Universal Tour
- Rat Attack
- Roadsters
- Robotron 64
- Rush 2: Extreme Racing USA
- Shadowgate 64: Trials Of The Four Towers
- Spacestation Silicon Valley
- Tarzan (Disney's)
- Top Gear Rally 2
- Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2
- Tony Hawk's Skateboarding
- Toy Story 2: Buzz Lightyear to the Rescue!
- Vigilante 8
- War Gods
- WCW Mayhem

UNCOMMON

- Aero Guage
- All Star Tennis '99
- All-Star Baseball 99
- All-Star Baseball 2000
- Army Men: Sarge's Heroes
- Banjo-Tooie
- Bass Hunter 64
- Batman Of The Future: Return Of The Joker
- Bio F.R.E.A.K.S.
- Castlevania: Legacy Of Darkness
- Chameleon Twist
- Chopper Attack
- CyberTiger
- Daffy Duck Starring As Duck Dodgers
- Daikatana
- Dark Rift
- Donald Duck Quack Attack (Disney's)
- Doom 64
- Dual Heroes
- Duke Nukem 64
- Duke Nukem Zero Hour
- Extreme-G XG2
- G.A.S.P.!!: Fighters Nextreme
- Gex 64: Enter the Gecko
- Holy Magic Century
- Hot Wheels: Turbo Racing
- Iggy's Reckin' Balls
- Killer Instinct Gold
- Knife Edge
- Lode Runner 3-D



Quake

- Mace: The Dark Age
- Madden Football 64
- Mario Party 3
- Monster Track Madness 64
- Mortal Kombat 4
- Mystical Ninja Starring Goemon
- NBA Hang Time
- New Tetris, The
- NFL Quarterback Club 98
- Operation Winback
- Paper Mario
- Paperboy
- Pokémon Stadium 2
- Premier Manager 64
- Quake
- Quake II
- Rainbow Six (Tom Clancy's)
- Rampage: World Tour
- Re-Volt
- Ready 2 Rumble Boxing
- Road Rash 64
- Rugrats In Paris: The Movie
- S.C.A.R.S.
- San Francisco Rush: Extreme Racing
- Scooby Doo!: Classic Creep Capers
- Snowboard Kids
- South Park: Chef's Luv Shack
- South Park Rally
- Starshot: Space Circus Fever
- Supercross 2000
- Superman
- Taz Express
- Tigger's Honey Hunt
- Tom And Jerry In Fists Of Fury
- Tonic Trouble
- Top Gear: Overdrive
- Turok 3: Shadow Of Oblivion
- Turok: Rage Wars
- Twisted Edge Snowboarding
- Vigilante 8: 2nd Offence
- Virtual Chess 64
- Virtual Pool 64
- Wayne Gretzky's 3D Hockey
- Wayne Gretzky's 3D Hockey '98
- WCW/NWO: Revenge
- WCW/NWO: World Tour

EXTREMELY RARE Games that have less than a few dozen known copies available.

VERY RARE Very hard to come by. Expect to see only a couple of copies per year.

RARE You should be able to source these in a reasonable amount of time.

UNCOMMON You won't find them straight away, but you will after a search.

COMMON Always just a click away for the average collector.

VERY COMMON So common you'll find them in virtually any bundle of games

- Wetrix
- World Driver Championship
- World League Soccer 2000
- Worms Armageddon
- WWF Wrestlemania 2000
- Xena: Warrior Princess

COMMON

- 007: The World Is Not Enough
- Armorines: Project S.W.A.R.M.
- Automobili Lamborghini
- Beetle Adventure Racing!
- Blast Corps
- Body Harvest
- Bomberman 64
- Bomberman Hero
- Buck Bumble
- Bug's Life, A
- Bust-A-Move 2: Arcade Edition
- Bust-A-Move 3 DX
- Carmageddon 64
- Castlevania
- Clayfighter 63 1/3
- Command & Conquer
- Cruis'n USA
- Cruis'n World
- Donkey Kong 64
- Earthworm Jim 3D
- ECW: Hardcore Revolution
- F1 World Grand Prix
- F1 World Grand Prix II
- Fighters Destiny
- Forsaken
- Glover
- Hybrid Heaven
- International Track & Field: Summer Games
- Jeremy McGrath Supercross 2000
- Jet Force Gemini
- Kobe Bryant in NBA Courtside
- The Legend Of Zelda: Majora's Mask
- LEGO Racers
- Magical Tetris Challenge
- Mario Golf
- Mario Party 2
- Mickey's Speedway USA
- Micro Machines 64 Turbo
- Mischief Makers
- Multi Racing Championship
- Nagano Winter Olympics '98
- NASCAR 99
- Perfect Dark
- Pokémon Puzzle League
- Pokémon Snap
- Rayman 2: The Great Escape
- Ridge Racer 64
- Rugrats: Treasure Hunt
- Shadow Man
- South Park
- Star Wars: Episode 1: Battle for Naboo
- Star Wars: Episode 1: Racer
- Star Wars: Shadows Of The Empire
- Super Smash Bros.
- Tetrisphere
- Top Gear Rally
- Turok: Dinosaur Hunter
- Waialae Country Club: True Golf Classics
- WipEout 64
- WWF Attitude: Get It!
- WWF No Mercy
- WWF War Zone
- Yoshi's Story

VERY COMMON

- 1080° Snowboarding
- Banjo-Kazooie
- Diddy Kong Racing
- Excitebike 64
- Extreme-G
- F-Zero X
- F1 Pole Position 64
- FIFA 64
- FIFA 99
- FIFA: Road to World Cup 98
- GoldenEye 007
- GT 64: Championship Edition
- International Superstar Soccer 64
- International Superstar Soccer 98
- The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Time
- Lylat Wars
- Mario kart 64
- Mario Party
- Mario Tennis
- Mission: Impossible
- Pilotwings 64
- Pokémon Stadium
- Star Wars: Rogue Squadron
- Super Mario 64
- Turok 2: Seeds Of Evil
- V-Rally: Edition 99
- Wave Race 64
- World Cup 98



Lylat Wars

Collector Q&A

Finnish games journalist Janne Kaitila explains the ins and outs of N64 collecting



So what drew you to collecting on the N64?
I wanted to start collecting all the games for a specific platform and the N64 seemed like a natural choice. It's old enough to be called retro, but new enough that finding CIB games is not overwhelming. Also, the library is only 400-odd strong.

How long has your collection taken?
The 'serious' collecting concerning the N64 started maybe five years ago.

What advice would you give to other readers interested in collecting N64 games?
As with all cartridge games, think whether or not you are going to start collecting loose or CIB games.

How hard is it tracking down CIB editions?
The cardboard boxes are a challenge. Many loose carts exist simply because people threw out the boxes, which isn't something that happens with plastic cases. Finding that mint box you've been searching for is a very rewarding thing.

Which item couldn't you live without and why?
The 64DD add-on. It was a miracle it was even released, but it was, and the end result is a fascinating piece of history, not to mention one of the most collectable.

What's the trickiest game you've had to source?
By far the most elusive game on the N64 is a CIB copy of *Clayfighter: Sculptor's Cut*. Released in the USA as a rental-only, loose carts are easy enough to find. However, the box is extremely rare, and the manual near-fabled. It's the only game that I don't own in CIB condition, as my cart and box are still waiting for a manual. A loose cart goes for 40 dollars, whereas a CIB game could be ten times more. That's quite a price on paper and card.

What is the most you've ever spent on a game?
That would be for one of my most prized possessions: *The Legend Of Zelda: Majora's Mask Limited Edition Adventure Set*. Released in Europe as a promotional item, I have one of the 1,000 produced. I paid €500 for it, but it was an easy purchase for me.

What are you still missing?
In addition to two 64DD games, I'm missing four japanese exclusives for the N64: *Choukuukan Night Pro Yakyuu King 2, Kira To Kaiketsu! 64 Tanteidan, Nushi Tsuri 64: Shiokaze Ninotte* and *Puyo Puyo Party*.



* Rarity guide courtesy of RetroCollect. Head to www.retrocollect.co.uk for more information

CLASSIC GAMING ON A BUDGET

CHEAP AS CHIPS



If there's one thing we've learnt about retro gaming, it's that your money can stretch an amazingly long way if you want it to. Granted, a mint copy of *Radiant Silvergun* is going to cost you a small fortune, but there are plenty of other worthy titles that can be picked up for less than a fiver…

HAUNTING STARRING POLTERGUY

INFO

- » **SYSTEM:** MEGA DRIVE
- » **RELEASED:** 1993
- » **PUBLISHER:** ELECTRONIC ARTS
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE



If you live next door to neighbours who listen to James Blunt, spend their days playing kiss chase in their homes wearing cinder block shoes, or redecorate whenever the weather turns sour then you'll probably find a quick game of *Haunting* a pretty therapeutic experience.

Seeming to meld the film premises from *Home Alone* and *Beetlejuice* with the gameplay of Sentient Software's *How To Be A Complete Bastard*, *Haunting* sees you assume the role of a deceased delinquent teenage greaser named Polterguy who is trying to rid his life (if that's the best word) of a thoroughly unpleasant family that has recently moved into his home. It's basically a spin on the haunted house scenario, with the beleaguered ghost trying to drive out his unwelcome house guests.

To achieve his aim, Polterguy must scare each of the four members of the greedy Sardinis – patriarch Vito, matriarch Flo, and their two adolescent brats Tony and Mimi – to the point that they're running scared for the nearest exit, and he does this by possessing various everyday household items around the home. There are around 400 objects in the game, and each features a funny, and sometimes quite grisly, scare animation. Some of the more humorous see Polterguy turning the family goldfish into a great white shark, and possessing the telly will prompt the actors in the show being broadcasted to start throwing punches in the real world.

There is one small stipulation to all this fearmongering though: possession of these objects causes Polterguy to lose a portion of his ectoplasmic energy. Thankfully, when his ecto levels are low he gets automatically transported to a place know as the underworld. A dark, dank cavernous grotto, here Polterguy must collect all of the ecto falling from the ceiling, avoid the dangers that lurk within, and reach the exit portal. If he succeeds, he's whisked back home with his ecto stock replenished ready to continue his terror campaign. It's also here he can pick up some useful scare spells to use against the Sardinis.

Though it's fair to say *Haunting* hasn't aged terribly well – the gameplay can feel a little cyclic, and the graphics and humour seem to have lost some of their charm over the years – because of its unusual concept it still stands out from the raft of shooting, racing and platform games that make up a high quota of the Mega Drive's game library.

Incidentally, if you don't own a Mega Drive then *Haunting* was also released as part of the EA Replay compilation for PSP, where it shares a UMD with 13 other 16-bit games. Retailing for full price back in 2006, it wasn't a terribly good value collection on its release. However, a quick scan on eBay shows that copies now sell for as little as £6 – about the same price as the Mega Drive version.

For that reason, it's a cheap and quirky game to add to your retro collection. If you find yourself with the urge to play something a little bit different one rainy afternoon, this certainly fits the bill nicely.



» [Mega Drive] If you like scaring people but don't like getting arrested or beaten up then you should certainly give *Haunting* a whirl.

» [Mega Drive] Some of the animations are actually quite gruesome, though these ones tend to be the best ones in the game.





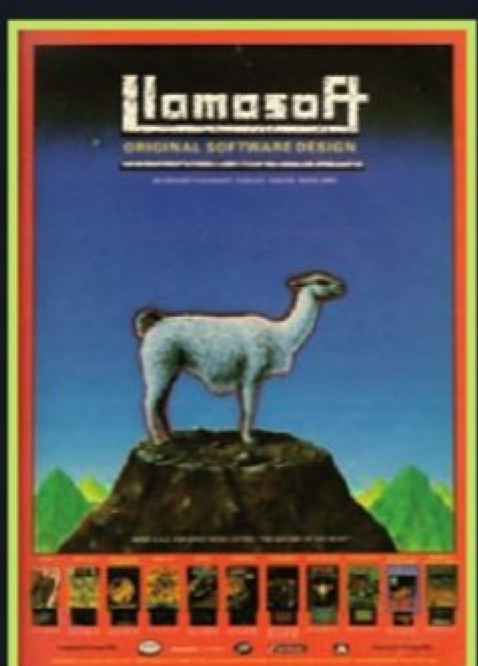
» [Mega Drive] While the underworld sections add challenge, they are pretty frustrating and pull you out of all the fun.



» [Mega Drive] Some of the scares in the game require you to bash buttons to make the fright more terrifying.

Revenge Of The Mutant Camels

To make amends for the animal cruelty of Attack Of The Mutant Camels, Jeff Minter let the beasts have their revenge in memorable fashion. Paul Drury hears all about his surreal spit-'em-up



IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** LLAMASOFT
- » **DEVELOPER:** JEFF MINTER
- » **RELEASED:** 1983
- » **GENRE:** SHOOT-'EM-UP

"I was at this computer show in Birmingham in the early Eighties," says Jeff Minter, taking another large swig of Guinness, "and I had Fish out of Marillion at my stand for half an hour trying to convince me, in his impenetrable Scottish accent, to do a game about smuggling cocaine into gigs. Later that show, him and Tony Crowther got into a drinking competition. All Tony remembers is being carried off and Fish still going."

Which is, of course, where we get the phrase 'to drink like a fish'. To be fair to Marillion's main man, if anyone was going to do a game with drugs, music and such out-of-the-box thinking, it was Jeff. We cornered the venerable coder at last year's R3Play show in Blackpool to quiz him about one of his best-loved C64 titles, *Revenge Of The Mutant Camels*, which featured suspicious roll-ups, deadly musical notes and, appropriately enough, amphetamine-fuelled fish.

Yet before you can have revenge you need a wrong to be righted, and that was provided by *Attack Of The Mutant Camels*. It wasn't Minter's first C64 game; that honour went to *Rox*, which he knocked up on his first night with Commodore's beige baby. "Jay Balakrishnan from HES [Human Engineered Software] gave me an NTSC machine and I wrote *Rox* in BASIC to see how the sprites worked and everything," recalls Jeff. "Then I got started on *Attack Of The Mutant Camels*, and you can blame *Computer & Video Games* magazine for that. They did a review of the Parker Brothers' *The Empire Strikes Back* game on the VCS and they described the walkers in it as giant mechanical camels. I thought, 'Mmm, I could do that!'"

As his first 'proper' C64 release, *Attack Of The Mutant Camels* wasn't a bad little blaster. There was some fun to be had in taking down the huge marching beasts, pretending that you were Luke Skywalker at Chester Zoo, but it was clear that Jeff was still finding his way with the new machine, what with the jerky scrolling and pantomime quality of the camels themselves.

"On the PAL version, the camels' bums would sometimes fall off," says Jeff, sheepishly. "They do look like two fat men in a camel suit. When

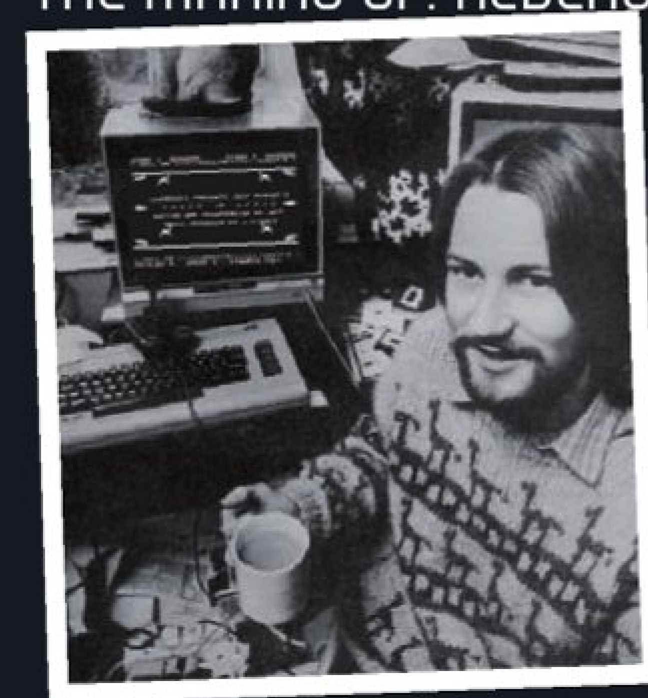


» [C64] If you're struggling, try typing in GOATS and see what tapping the space bar does…



» [C64] Can you defeat all 42 levels and save camelkind?







"A cup of tea and rain. I love those icons of Britain and they had to go in" JEFF MAKES US PROUD TO BE BRITISH

the arse falls off, I should have put a pair of legs sticking out!"

It wasn't just the technical failings Jeff wanted to address when he came to make *Revenge*, though. The animal lover was prompted by a deep sense of guilt. "I really love camels – lovely creatures – and I thought it was a bit poor that I encouraged people to shoot them up," he says, remorsefully. "So I made up this whole elaborate story about how the camels had been abducted and reprogrammed to fight against humanity, but somehow they'd been able to break their bonds and fight back. That was what *Revenge Of The Mutant Camels* was all about!"

Spurred on by this desire to put things right, Jeff worked for two solid months in the latter half of 1983 to create his digital apology to even-toed ungulates everywhere. Development was as smooth as the scrolling, with Jeff having mastered raster interrupts but not yet ventured into the complicated art of sprite multiplexing, which would come later. With a solid game engine in place, it was just a case of coming up with ideas for levels – and what a lot we got for our pennies.

"I remember Matthew Smith had done *Manic Miner* with 20 levels," notes Jeff. "Having lots of levels was a big thing then, so I wanted to get loads of attack waves in. I was aware of the significance of 42 and thought that was probably a good place to stop. I could have added more; I don't think I was out of memory."

You have to wonder what kind of mind filled those 42 levels with exploding sheep, suicidal windsurfers and giant spliffs, though perhaps that last enemy gives a clue to the others. What is clear is the nationality of a game that featured red telephone boxes, teacups and it literally raining cats and dogs. "I know I'm quintessentially British," grins Jeff. "I've lived in America but the reason I couldn't stay there very long is that I'm too British. I missed a good cup of tea and a curry. And rain. I love those icons of Britain and they had to go in."

The English obsession with puns also popped up in numerous levels. 'No Cruise Is Good News' had peace protesters and CND signs bouncing between missiles sporting US flags, and 'It's Me And Ewe Baby' had Jeff himself among the flock. "I even put my little llama jumper on me!" he laughs. "I had long hair and looked like a hippy. I'd be walking round town and people would shout out, 'Oi Neil!' That *Young Ones* taunt followed me around and influenced a few games, hence the CND signs. And I thought I'd give myself a kick up the backside. When you shoot me, I bounce off the screen holding my arse. Did I have to model that? No, I had that pose quite naturally, I think!"

Hairy creatures feature heavily in the menagerie attacking your camel, as do nods to other games. *Pac-Man* ghosts, *Space Invaders* aliens and inverted Atari logos mingle with dive-bombing ducks and particularly persistent goats. "They aren't actually



» [C64] He's behind you!





REVENGE OF THE MUTANT CAMELS



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

GRIDRUNNER
SYSTEMS: VIC-20
YEAR: 1982

SHEEP IN SPACE
SYSTEM: C64
YEAR: 1984

MINOTAUR RESCUE (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: iOS
YEAR: 2011

dead," explains Jeff. "They lie on their backs with their little legs in the air and randomly get back up again. Don't let a dead goat go underneath you, as it can jump up and hit you in the bollocks!"

Sound advice in life as well as in the game, which required a different approach to each assault wave. Part of the fun was working out how to tackle a level most effectively. Some, such as Jeff's favourite, 'Aggressive Australian Alpinists', could easily be beaten by holding your camel's position and firing at a fixed point to dispatch the mob of skiing kangaroos, while others, like 'Through Pastures Blue', required some well-timed jumps and crouches. Unlike some of Minter's earlier blasters, the relatively large size of your humped avatar meant the game could not use a one-hit-kill system. Instead, you had a protective neutronium shield that was partially recharged at the end of each wave, resulting in much nervous glancing at the distance to your next checkpoint. Those who did survive to the final wave were treated to the postmodern spectacle of 'Revenge Of The Mutant Mutant Camelids', where they faced attack from llamas spewing forth tiny replicas of their own beast. You were never in doubt that you were playing a game from the Minter stable…

"For me, each game is a personal expression," says Jeff, proudly. "I like that people can look at one of my games and say, 'That's definitely Llamasoft.' Programmers used to strive to do that. You got to know the work of your favourite programmer, like you did with your favourite musicians. With modern games made by huge teams you lose some of that personality."

Jeff added a personal touch by including a long scrolling message on the title screen, too. It was something he first employed in *Matrix* – confusingly retitled *Attack Of The Mutant Camels* in the US because publisher HES liked that name but not the game – and in *Revenge*, while listening to some music created by Jeff's boyhood friend James Lisney, you could read some musings, which concluded with a priceless jibe at software pirates.

"I felt like I was talking to friends when I put together those messages," he smiles. "I remember sitting down late at night composing them, having a chat about what I was doing, what music I was listening to. We had a personal connection with the people that bought our games through the shows we went to, and this was a little way of sending a personal message to all the users."

Revenge was launched at one of those big London computer shows of yore, where the Llamasoft stand would be full of games to play and Minter family members to meet. And this time, Jeff had something special planned for one skilled camel commander. "We held a high score competition on *Revenge* over the



» [C64] In a nice touch, players could tackle the levels in a random order and change the distance between zones.



» [C64] The 'test team' thanked in Jeff's message consisted of mates Hendy the Mad Mathemagician, Scum and MC Ertiss.

"Each of my games is a personal expression. People know they're definitely Llamasoft"

WHY DON'T MORE DEVELOPERS EMBRACE SKIING KANGAROOS, EH?

THE SEXUAL LIFE OF A CAMEL

GIVEN MINTER'S INTEREST in camels and other ungulates, we wondered where it all began. "It was back when I was a student," Jeff begins. "I'd set my heart on buying a ZX80 but didn't have any money so, after college, I'd clean bogs and offices at a bank in Basingstoke. One day, I was cleaning one of their bigger offices and I found this book by Anais Nin in the bin. Lo and behold, it was a book of filthy stories. I thought, 'I'll have that for some further perusal.' In one of the stories, someone has intimate relations with an animal called a vicuña. I didn't know what a vicuña was, so had to look it up. I thought, 'Yeah, that's quite a nice-looking little beast, with its long neck.' It's a relative of the llama and one of the four South American camelids. A fondness for those animals became entrenched in me from that day onwards."

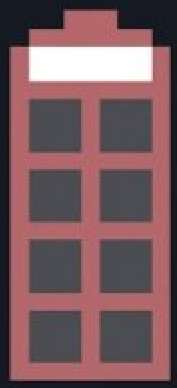






» [Amiga] *Revenge* on the Amiga added a helpful goat and various illegal substances…

REVENGE IS SWEET: OUR FIVE FAVOURITE LEVELS



This Kiosk Is A Nuclear Free Zone

Shoot the telephone boxes from behind and they get pulled closer rather than pushed away. A bug, Jeff? "It was emergent behaviour – you could herd the phone boxes!"



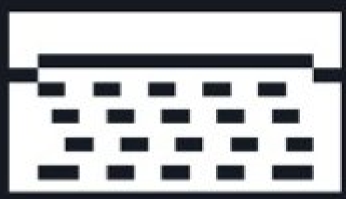
Careful With That Axe Eugene

A reference to both a Pink Floyd song and the bespectacled Imagine coder Eugene Evans, who appeared in *Manic Miner*'s 'Eugene's Lair'. He also gets a nod in 'Wacky Whackers'.



Sidney And The Portolavs

Jeff: "Tony Takoushi, a mate of mine and a games journo, begged me to put in a level featuring a gentleman called Sidney on the toilet, so I did. I never knew what it was about." Any suggestions, readers?



Beware The Rubber Keys Of Doom

Fuelling the fires of the English home computer civil war of the Eighties, Jeff gets a dig in at Sir Clive's zombie-fleshed rival to his beloved C64.



More Tea Vicar?

What's more British than tea with the reverend? Except this toxic brew drips dangerously from swirling teapots and deadly teacups.





» Jeff at the R3Play show last year, explaining the importance of Anais Nin in Llamasoft history.

two days of the show, and we didn't tell people what the prize was. A lad called Justin won and I think he expected a pile of Llamasoft games. He was absolutely delighted when we told him he was going to Egypt on Concorde. Me and mum and dad went too, and it was a cracking day. I remember my dad went in to work on Monday and moaned about the traffic in Cairo…"

Jeff smiles wistfully as he recalls Llamasoft in its Eighties heyday. He clearly has a lasting affection for the original C64 version of *Revenge*, though in gameplay terms he prefers the 16-bit releases that added in happy pills and a hairy companion. "I liked the idea of a little AI droid that helps you," he explains, "plus I wanted to have two players playing simultaneously so one could control the goat and they played as a team. You can have it on automatic, though you do have some control. You can eject it off your hump and it'll do stuff for you and then it'll sit down and get back on your hump. Actually my favourite version is the Atari TT one. I had that machine for developing for the Jaguar and did it for a laugh really. Very few people had one and I didn't expect to sell many. And I didn't!"

Jeff would revisit his mutant camels once more in his final release for the ageing C64. *Revenge*'s sequel, *Return Of The Mutant Camels*, had some suitably surreal foes and a charming Peruvian score by Ben Daglish, but Jeff acknowledges that he may have unnecessarily overcomplicated the basic formula. However, his feelings towards the Amiga and ST conversions are considerably less charitable. "Mastertronic did them and I thought, 'Well, those machines are a lot more powerful so they'll be at least as good, if not better.' They were rubbish. Absolutely rubbish. They didn't even send me a copy. I had to buy a copy in a shop in Basingstoke to see what they'd done. I got it home and thought, 'Bloody hell, they've made a complete dog's breakfast of it.' I felt it besmirched the good name of mutant camels!"



Frustrating in a different way was the camels' planned appearance on the ill-fated Konix Multisystem in the form of *Attack Of The Mutant Camels '88*. "It actually slipped to become *AMC '89*," adds Jeff. "It was nearly finished – about 70 per cent complete – when Konix went tits-up. You had to shoot the camels and they dropped something, which you had to carry back to your base as it dangled underneath your ship. It had some nice fractal-generated music, too. It was a bit of a waste of time and money, but I still enjoyed the process. It was fun and interesting to code on that thing. I wasn't angry; just disappointed."

To see this especially colourful and frenetic lost instalment, visit the excellent Konix Multisystem Archive (**www.konixmultisystem.co.uk**), where you'll find some intriguing footage of the game in action. As Jeff drinks the last of his Guinness and we prepare for our R3Play Q&A session, we wonder whether it might be time to reacquaint gamers with those distinctive mega-camels? "Could be," he muses. "I've got this project at the moment of making nice little iPhone games in the style of old hardware. Maybe I could go full circle, since it was Parker Brothers' *The Empire Strikes Back* that inspired the camels in the first place, and do *Attack Of The Mutant Camels* on the VCS? And this time, I could make them look less pantomime!"



» [C64] Jeff says that *Revenge* showed how he was getting to grips with the inner workings of the C64 but still describes the collision detection as "ropey".

Special thanks to Reinhard Klinksiek (search for 'DerSchmu' on YouTube) and Mark 'RetroVision' Rayson for their help with this piece.



When a reinvigorated Duke Nukem crash landed onto PCs in 1996, he rocked the FPS genre to its foundations. This year, as the character's astonishingly long-awaited sequel inches ever closer, he may very well do the same again. Stuart Hunt explores the past of videogames' most irreverent all-action hero



HAIL TO THE DUKE

THE HISTORY OF DUKE NUKEM

Entrepreneurial programmer Scott Miller formed Apogee Software in 1987 after pioneering the successful shareware model for PC game distribution. The basic theory behind it was this: Apogee would split games into parts and offer the first as free-to-play across internet bulletin board systems. Rather than single levels, these free tasters of games would usually take the form of an entire episode, giving gamers enough of a chance to experience the gameplay and hopefully get hooked for more – at which point Apogee would make its money by charging customers for more levels. It was an idea that in many ways provided the conduit for mainstream PC gaming.

Apogee's first release was the PC-DOS roguelike dungeon-crawling game *Kingdom Of Kroz*. The first episode was released as shareware and was later expanded into seven episodes. Encouraged by the game's sales and the positive reaction to this sales model, in 1990 Scott quit his job to concentrate on Apogee full-time, and the following year united with high school friend George Broussard and hired several key developers to grow the company. Before long, Apogee had aligned with a number of studios, among them a fledgling id Software, which would famously partner with Apogee for the release of *Commander Keen* and the seminal FPS *Wolfenstein 3D*. But Apogee continued to self-write and publish games of its own, and *Duke Nukem*, a collaborative effort between Scott, George, Todd Replogle and Allen Blum, was by far its most successful creation.

When you consider that the character of Duke Nukem is one of the brashest, loudest and most self-assured creations in the history of videogames, he didn't have the most gung-ho of industry starts. For many gamers their first ever taste of Duke came courtesy of the groundbreaking *Duke Nukem 3D* in 1996, but the character had actually appeared in two games prior to its release. Both were 2D run-and-gunners, and both were pretty restrained in comparison.

The first, titled *Duke Nukem* and released in 1991, saw the eponymous bleached-haired hero trying to topple the nefarious Dr Proton – a mad scientist who was hell bent on world domination. After previous attempts by the world's combined military to topple the crazed scientist end in failure, the CIA decides to enlist the help of the Duke.

Arming him with an experimental Nuclear Pistol, Duke had to venture into the post-apocalyptic world of Shrapnel City to infiltrate Proton's underground lair, which was heavily guarded by a variety of droids and laden with traps and a ridiculous amount of closed-circuit television. From here, the mission took him into space and ended with him travelling through the fabric of time to capture his target, time travel being a theme that would be wheeled out a few times throughout the series. Split into three distinct episodes – 'Shrapnel City', 'Mission: Moonbase' and 'Trapped In The Future' – the first episode was distributed freely by Apogee using shareware, and this ultimately proved fundamental to the game's success: *Duke Nukem* reached the top ten of the shareware charts and stayed there for close to two years.

The gameplay consisted of large four-way scrolling levels that were packed with a dizzying number of secrets to find and power-ups to use, such as weapon upgrades, a grappling hook and, of course, accelerated jumping boots. The basic aim of each stage was simply to help Duke find the keys needed to make it to the level exit. But there were secondary objectives, such as shooting all the security cameras or successfully collecting letters to spell the word 'DUKE' to earn bonus points. The core gameplay, though, was very much of the *Turrican* platform-shooter ilk, and some eagle-eyed gamers have since discovered that *Duke Nukem* even cheekily borrowed a number of background graphics, as well as gameplay, from similar PC



MAKE IT, BABY!

To show you just how long Duke Nukem Forever has been in the making, here's a timeline of big FPS games that saw release during its 14-year development

1997 3D REALMS ANNOUNCES *DUKE NUKEM FOREVER*. THE GAME WILL BE MADE USING ID SOFTWARE'S *QUAKE II* ENGINE.



1997 RARE RELEASES *GOLDENEYE 007* ON THE N64, AND SINGLE-HANDEDLY KICK-STARTS THE CONSOLE INDUSTRY'S LOVE AFFAIR WITH THE FPS.



1997 ID SOFTWARE RELEASES *QUAKE II* IN DECEMBER THIS YEAR. UNLIKE THE FIRST GAME, THE SEQUEL HAS A SCIENCE-FICTION THEME.

1998 THE GAME IS PREMIERED AT E3 THIS YEAR. NO SOONER HAS THE BUZZ FROM THE EVENT DIED DOWN DOES 3D REALMS ANNOUNCE THAT *DNF* WILL BE SIGNIFICANTLY DELAYED.

1998 VALVE RELEASES *HALF-LIFE*. IT'S PRETTY GOOD, AND A BIT POPULAR.

1999 *DNF* MISSES ITS REVISED DEADLINE.

1999 *QUAKE III ARENA* AND *UNREAL TOURNAMENT* ARE RELEASED. BOTH GAMES SHOOT TO SUCCESS THANKS TO THEIR FOCUS ON ONLINE MULTIPLAYER.

1999 BUNGIE FIRST UNVEILS *HALO*. IT STARTS LIFE AS A REAL-TIME STRATEGY GAME EXCLUSIVELY FOR THE MAC.

2000 TAKE-TWO INTERACTIVE PURCHASES PUBLISHING RIGHTS TO *DUKE NUKEM FOREVER* FROM INFOGRAMES.



2000 ION STORM RELEASES *DEUS EX*. IT MELDS FPS WITH ADVENTURE GAME GAMEPLAY AND CYBERPUNK THEMES.

2001 TAKE-TWO ANNOUNCES THAT *DNF* WON'T BE RELEASED UNTIL 2002. AND THAT WAS AT THE EARLIEST.

shooting games released at the time, including Manfred Trenz's C64 classic.

Others have also noticed that, in version 2.0 of the game, Duke's name is strangely altered to 'Duke Nukum'. This switch occurred during the time of the game's testing process, when Apogee learned that a character from the television show *Captain Planet And The Planeteers* was also named Duke Nukem. Assuming the name to be copyrighted, Duke's surname was subsequently changed. Apogee later discovered that the name hadn't been registered and so quickly secured it itself.

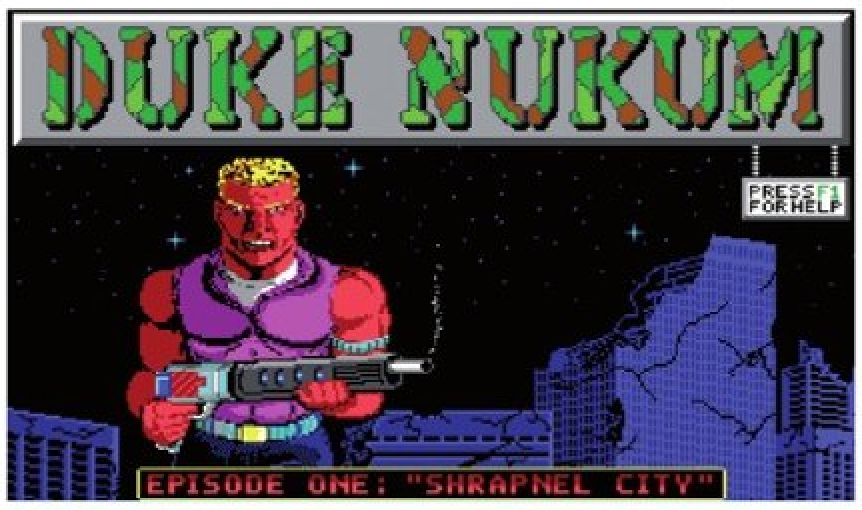
When asked about the origin of Duke, Scott and George have answered in the past that at the time they were 30-something developers with a strong desire to play more mature games. Finding little out there to placate this urge, *Duke Nukem* was simply a result of the duo making the type of games that they themselves wanted to play.

In the 1993 sequel, *Duke Nukem II*, Apogee could be seen focusing a little more on Duke's characterisation and also introducing some more of those adult themes to the franchise. The character was now dressed in his familiar red muscle vest and blue denim jeans – still without sunglasses, though – and his bulletproof ego was also given its first chance to flex its muscles during the game's irreverent story, which was penned by id Software's Tom Hall, who worked as creative director on the game. In addition to adding the humour and refining Duke's look, Apogee began inserting pop-cultural references into the franchise, with various nods to television shows such as *Star Trek* and *Oprah*, and the movies *Lethal Weapon* and *The Terminator*.

> "DUKE NUKEM 3D CHANGED EVERYTHING FOR BOTH DUKE AND APOGEE"

The story goes that after rescuing the world from Dr Proton, Duke was transformed into an overnight global celebrity. *Duke Nukem II* opened with our hero being interviewed on a talk show that resembles *The Oprah Winfrey Show*. Promoting the launch of his new autobiography, entitled *Why I'm So Great*, Duke's self-marketing patter is abruptly disrupted when he is abducted by a hostile alien race known as the Rigelatins, who want to upload Duke's brain patterns into a war computer and use it to conquer Earth. Imprisoned on their ship, Duke escapes capture using his Explodo-Molar – obviously – and sets about once again saving the universe.

Duke Nukem II retained the side-scrolling run-and-gun gameplay of before, but this benefited from enhanced visuals, a better selection of weapons, and added vehicle sections, and also featured improved controls, allowing Duke to now fire his gun up and down. The game was notably longer and comprised eight episodes, with the first once again made free to play via shareware. It was a popular game that certainly improves over the original, but it was merely a taster of what was to come next.



» [PC] The original *Duke* became a popular shareware game, but the success it saw pales in significance to the money vacuum that was *Duke 3D*.



REBUILDING THE DUKE

Duke Nukem 3D changed everything for both Duke and Apogee. The success and fortunes it amassed are largely considered to be the main catalyst behind Apogee's transformation into 3D Realms, which was originally set up as a division of Apogee under which the company would put out its 3D games.





Duke Nukem 3D famously dropped the side-scrolling gameplay and re-imagined the franchise as a loud and brash first-person shooter. A reboot of sorts, it shared a similar story and even level structure to the first game: Duke was again returning to Earth to take out a menace single-handed, and the game was divided into three distinct, and familiar, episodes: beginning on Earth, the second taking place on a space station, and the final level even seeing Duke return to Shrapnel City.

Duke 3D ran from a highly sophisticated engine called Build, designed by programmer Ken Silverman. Contracted by Apogee to come up with the first-person shooter engine that would be used in the game, it was Ken's engine that ultimately provided 3D Realms with the cornerstone to make *Duke Nukem 3D* a success.

Considered at the time to be technically far superior to id's *Doom* engine, it allowed Apogee to make the world of *Duke Nukem 3D* the most interactive, realistic and complex to have ever been seen in a first-person shooter at the time. The Build engine featured a number of impressive things over its contemporaries, and chief among these was the ability to construct dynamic environments. Build allowed for clever real-time manipulation of shapes (dubbed 'sectors') in order to create complex moving elements such as lifts and destructible environments.

With this powerful new engine at its disposal, 3D Realms wasted no time in showcasing its potential, loading *Duke Nukem 3D* with a staggering amount of variety, realistic locales to explore, and imagination. In addition, Build also allowed for a large amount of interactivity in the game, and this too was used to great effect. Whether using urinals, flicking on cinema projectors, clambering around inside air ducts or visiting strip clubs, *Duke 3D* provided a seemingly endless abundance of diversions for players to discover, and doing so certainly played a big role in the game's charm.

Complementing this new 3D world, 3D Realms felt Duke's personality could also benefit from an added dimension. And so, keeping his red vest and blue jeans, Duke finally got his signature shades and also was given a voice, courtesy of voice actor Jon St John. Keen to make him a character that stood out from the pack, Duke was made to be atypical of the silent and faceless FPS heroes that had come before. An exaggerated caricature of some of Hollywood's most memorable action heroes, he was a clear amalgamation of cult screen characters played by everyone from Clint Eastwood and Arnold Schwarzenegger to Bruce Campbell and Kurt Russell. And perhaps through his voice more than anything else, *Duke Nukem 3D* would establish Duke as the hyper-confident, hyper-egotistical, hyper-womanising hero he's known as today.



Q&A SCOTT MILLER

We speak to Apogee/3D Realms founder and Duke Nukem co-creator Scott Miller to find out more about the Duke Nukem franchise and the now-legendary development of Duke Nukem Forever

RG: We guess we should start off by asking you how the idea for Duke originated…
SM: The original idea was to create a heavy metal hero, a hero from the heavy metal generation – the Eighties. Duke still retains a little of this original idea.

RG: How difficult was it to make the Duke's transition from 2D to 3D?
SM: At the time it was wildly difficult, because 3D was so new to the industry. Looking back, it's quite impressive that the game only took three years to make by an average of ten people.

RG: With *Duke Nukem 3D*, did you always go out of your way to create a game that would court controversy?
SM: Controversy generates attention, and that's what we purposely set out to do.

RG: How important was the shareware model to *Duke Nukem*'s success?
SM: Shareware allowed Apogee to self-publish in an era when self-publishing didn't really exist. So, without question, both Apogee and *Duke* needed shareware at the time.

RG: Why did you decide to change the perspective for *Duke Nukem: Manhattan Project*?
SM: This was originally conceived as an online-only, back-to-Duke's-roots game. So that's why we went with the side-scrolling perspective, updating it with a 3D engine.

RG: How much involvement did you have with the many console ports of *Duke Nukem 3D*?
SM: 3D Realms was involved from the start to finish of all of the console games, in terms of design consultation and play-testing.

RG: The *Duke* series is steeped in pop culture. How important do you feel this is for the games?
SM: When we designed *Duke Nukem 3D*, we added a lot of little Easter eggs in the game, most of them somewhat humorous. It got to the point that we stopped hiding the humour and just made it a part of the game. And a lot of the humour is based on the popular culture of the time. For example, one of the famous bits of humour in *DN3D* related to the OJ Simpson murder trial. In the end, this just helps set *Duke* games apart from other games. And it makes sense within the context of *Duke Nukem*'s world, because *Duke* takes place on Earth, in the not-too-distant future.

RG: So, *Duke Nukem Forever*, then. The title was certainly apt…
SM: My son called it *Duke Nukem ForNever.*

RG: So why has the game taken so long?
SM: Ambition and perfectionism. Also, for too long the company was undermanned, which meant we were always losing ground versus the other top studios making shooters.

RG: How difficult was it constantly rebuilding the game with new graphics engines?
SM: The game has used the Unreal engine for ten years, but our coders had to update the technology numerous times to keep up with the times.

RG: Is it true that George Broussard would continually want new elements to be added to the game?
SM: Somewhat true. Again, because the studio was undermanned, when new games came out with hot new features, it was always too tempting to want to include those features in *Duke Forever.*

RG: Both yourself and George have put a lot of your own personal money into *Forever*. It obviously means a great deal to you…
SM: Very true. The game is a huge personal investment of time and money.

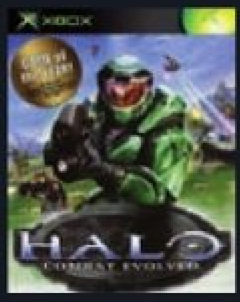
RG: How does it feel knowing that you'll no longer be a part of it?
SM: The game that is coming out is essentially a 3D Realms game. Gearbox took over a finished PC game and they are managing the ports and the multiplayer. But the game was finished on the PC, and this is essentially the game that will be released. I'm very excited for all the developers who contributed so much to the project and finally get to see their work appreciated.

RG: Why has Duke Nukem remained such an enduring figure with gamers?
SM: Duke is about a bigger-than-life character and humour. Duke is a pure Eighties action movie. Duke's personality and humour is his calling card, and I just don't think any other shooter competes.



HAIL TO THE DUKE

MAKE IT, BABY! CONT.



2001 *HALO*, REDESIGNED AS AN FPS AND SNAPPED UP BY MICROSOFT, APPEARS AS A LAUNCH TITLE FOR THE COMPANY'S FIRST GAMES CONSOLE, THE XBOX.

2002 BOTH *DUKE NUKEM: MANHATTAN PROJECT* AND *DUKE NUKEM ADVANCE* ARE RELEASED, BUT STILL NO SIGN OF *DNF*.

2002 *METROID PRIME* IS RELEASED FOR THE GAMECUBE, AND SUPERBLY REINVENTS THE FRANCHISE AS AN FPS.



2002 THE FIRST *CALL OF DUTY* IS RELEASED FOR THE PC. IT USES THE *QUAKE III ARENA* ENGINE.

2004 *DNF* WALKS AWAY WITH A LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT GONG IN *WIRED*'S ANNUAL VAPORWARE AWARDS

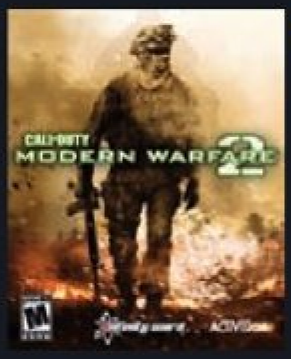
2004 VALVE FINALLY RELEASES THE HUGELY ANTICIPATED *HALF-LIFE 2*, ITSELF LONG-DELAYED, AND COMPLETELY REWRITES THE FPS RULEBOOK.

2006 BROUSSARD TELLS JOURNALISTS THAT *DNF* IS FINISHED. THEY ARE INVITED TO 3D REALMS TO SEE THE GAME.

2007 3D REALMS RELEASES A NEW TEASER TRAILER FOR *DNF*.

2007 ID SOFTWARE ANNOUNCES *RAGE* AT QUAKECON. IT'S THE COMPANY'S FIRST NEW FPS SERIES SINCE *QUAKE*.

2009 3D REALMS MAKES THE SHOCK ANNOUNCEMENT THAT IT IS CLOSING ITS DOORS. GEARBOX THEN BUYS THE RIGHTS TO THE *DUKE NUKEM* FRANCHISE AND SETS ABOUT PICKING UP WHERE 3D REALMS LEFT OFF WITH *DNF*.



2009 *CALL OF DUTY: MODERN WARFARE 2* IS RELEASED WORLDWIDE. REPUTEDLY SELLING AN ASTONISHING 4.7 MILLION UNITS IN 24 HOURS, IT BECOMES THE BIGGEST ENTERTAINMENT LAUNCH EVER.

2010 *DUKE NUKEM FOREVER* IS UNVEILED AT THE PENNY ARCADE EXPO. THE GAME IS FINALLY COMING IN MAY 2011.

MAY 2011 *DUKE NUKEM FOREVER* IS – FINGERS CROSSED – RELEASED.

"LIFE'S A BEACH SAW DUKE INDULGING IN A WELL-DESERVED SPOT OF R&R"





Of course, any FPS hero worth his salt needs a satisfying arsenal of weapons to wield, and in keeping with the humorous, overblown tone of the game, 3D Realms fitted *Duke Nukem 3D* with a plethora of imaginative armaments to cater for all tastes and situations. As well as the robust and powerful pistol and chaingun, and power weapons like the RPG and Devastator, it came up with inventive and downright ridiculous ways to rip through the alien horde, including Shrink Rays, Freezethrowers and, of course, a legendary melee attack in the Mighty Boot – not to be confused with *The Mighty Boosh*.

From its world to its hero, even down to its weapons, every facet of *Duke 3D* oozed character and bravado, and so it was little surprise that many felt it refreshing and the game became a massive hit. As well as success, though, it brought a foreseeable amount of controversy to 3D Realms' door due to its adult themes and violence. And despite featuring a parental lock that removed certain adult and violent elements from the game, it was banned in Germany and Australia.

EXPANDING AND SPINNING

Following *Duke 3D*'s success, 3D Realms followed it up with *Duke Nukem 3D: Atomic Edition*, an update/expansion pack that would add a new final fourth stage ('The Birth') that comprised 11 new levels, a brand new weapon called the Microwave Expander – which works the opposite way to the Shrink Ray, bloating enemies to the point of exploding – as well as a handful of new enemies and a new final boss: the Alien Queen, which was a blatant parody of the nasty creatures in the *Alien* franchise.

Following this, around 1997 a series of authorised and unauthorised expansion packs for *Duke 3D* began appearing on the PC. All of them were developed outside 3D Realms and many published by the now-defunct WizardWorks. The best are considered to be the ones from Sunstorm Interactive, which released



the popular *Duke It Out In DC*, an episode set in Washington DC that featured Duke blasting aliens around landmarks such as the White House, the Lincoln Memorial and the Smithsonian Institute; and *Duke Caribbean: Life's A Beach*, which saw Duke indulging in a well-deserved spot of R&R, before an alien invasion interrupts his sunbathing and bird-watching and he has to get back to his usual duties – perhaps it should have been called *Duke Nukem: Busman's Holiday*. This expansion featured all-new levels that were set in and around beachside locales such as hotels and water parks, and the enemies, weapons and pickups were suitably themed too: armour became sun cream, Duke wore swim shorts, and his weapons included water pistols and conch shells. Oh yeah, and the Mighty Boot was renamed to the limp-sounding Sandal Foot.

Released shortly after Christmas in 1997, the expansion pack *Duke: Nuclear Winter* saw Duke appear in a bizarre festive-themed mission that actually saw him tussle with Santa Claus – albeit an alien-infected one. Tracking his portly target to his base of operations in the North Pole, the levels were a mixture of new and old stages that were taken from the original *Duke 3D*, but now capped with snow and with the pig police and strippers given bobble hats to wear. Reusing levels from the original *Duke Nukem 3D* didn't go down that well, as you would expect, and *Duke: Nuclear Winter* was met by a suitably cold reaction from many fans.

It was also in April of this year that 3D Realms first made the announcement that it would be releasing a true sequel to *Duke Nukem 3D*, entitled *Duke Nukem Forever*, further revealing that the game would run on id Software's *Quake II* engine and would be coming our way sometime in 1999. A few months after this announcement the first screenshots and previews of the game began surfacing in the gaming press.

id ON DUKE

JOHN CARMACK



I was never personally very fond of *Duke Nukem*. The original was a fine action game, but the trappings that made it stand out didn't really appeal to me. The development of the sequel showed worrisome issues very early on, back when it was being based on the original *Quake* engine – Todd was pursuing a lot of creative gameplay ideas, but it was all being done in *Quake* C like a user game mod, rather than a serious development project. Still, I am happy for every project that pushes through to completion. It is always sad to see man-lifetimes of effort come to nothing.

As 3D Realms focused on the development of *Duke Nukem Forever*, a number of spin-off games were released to help keep *Duke Nukem* firmly on gamers' radars and to also satisfy fans patiently awaiting the true sequel to *Duke 3D*. With 3D Realms wanting to keep these titles at arm's length from the main series of games, all would be third-person shooters and all outsourced to external development teams.

The first of these games to see release was *Duke Nukem: Time To Kill*, which was released exclusively for the PlayStation in 1998. Developed by n-Space, a studio whose previous projects had included two games based on the *Rugrats* cartoon and the pun-tastic *Mary-Kate & Ashley: Magical Mystery Mall*, it would be fair to say that *Duke Nukem* was a big departure from the usual licensed tie-ins that the developer was used to handling. Despite this, though, it delivered fans an interesting and popular *Duke Nukem* episode, even if it was a tiny bit derivative.

Clearly aiming to ape the success of *Tomb Raider* on the console, *Time To Kill* was a third-person run-and-gun game that featured occasional platforming, switch-punching, key-locating and, of course, block-climbing. The game's plot saw Duke having to travel through time to stop another new alien threat, which was trying to subvert the course of history to basically wipe him from existence. It was a plot device used to allow the designers to be more creative with the licence and plonk Duke inside a variety of locales – in this instance the Wild West, medieval Europe and ancient Rome – and, we suspect, to make coming up with gags and awful puns a lot easier too. It worked, as *Time To Kill* became the most successful console game to ever star the cigar-chomping hero.

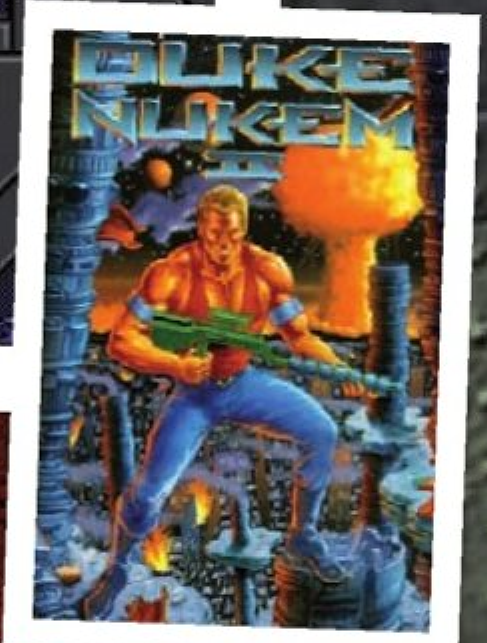
» [GBA] *Duke Nukem Advance* offered a good representation of *Duke Nukem 3D's* gameplay, though it was an entirely new game.



But *Time To Kill* was actually the second *Duke Nukem* title to appear on the PlayStation, as in 1997 Virgin Interactive published a lacklustre port of *Duke Nukem 3D* for the console, developed by Aardvark Software. Rebranded *Duke Nukem: Total Meltdown*, the game was unpopular with fans owing to its choppy frame rate and the fact that they also had to be dual-wielding copies of the game and PlayStations in order to link up and play multiplayer. Why we are choosing not to brush it under the carpet is because it featured a new exclusive episode that you can't play on any other version of *Duke Nukem 3D*. Titled 'Plug 'N' Pray', it contained seven new levels, and many lampooned popular PlayStation franchises including *WipEout*, *Resident Evil* and *Tomb Raider*.

In the same year in which *Time To Kill* was released, something resembling a remake or enhanced version







» [PC] *Duke 3D* was littered with Easter eggs, and our favourite is this one, which shows the remains of a space marine who would look more at home in *Doom*.



MOBILE DUKE

We purposely omitted the *Duke Nukem* games on mobile phones from the feature, for no particular reason other than we were thinking of boxout ideas and thought this was a quick and easy one to write [What? – Ed]. Anyway, yeah, Duke received two games on mobile phones – or cell phones, as they are known in some parts of the world – and both were released in 2004. The first was *Duke Nukem Mobile*, which was a side-scrolling shooter very much of the Konami *Jail Break* mould, while the second was the slightly more ambitious *Duke Nukem Mobile 3D*, which aped the traditional *Duke 3D* gameplay but featured all-new locations – some of which are gothic in theme and make the game look like a weird *Doom*/*Duke Nukem* crossover.



Q&A RANDY PITCHFORD

Gearbox Software boss Randy Pitchford tells us what the Duke means to him, and how the studio is helping to end an anxious 14-year rollercoaster of waiting for fans of the franchise



RG: Tell us about your involvement with the Duke over the years.

RP: A lot of people don't know this, but my career went from being an amateur game maker to becoming a professional when I moved out to Texas to join the team at 3D Realms and work on *Duke Nukem*. The first commercial game I ever contributed to was *Duke Nukem 3D*. When I joined the team in Texas, I was a designer and built several levels in *Duke Nukem 3D: Atomic Edition*. It was guys like Allen Blum, Todd Replogle, Richard Gray and Ken Silverman who really inspired me and helped me understand that what it really took to make great games was passion, commitment and self-driven will to get it done. I left 3D Realms in 1997 with a few people who I met working at the studio and, at that point, *Duke Nukem Forever* had already begun development. At lot has evolved and been iterated upon over the years, but it's astonishing how much of that original core intent and storyline remains to this day. From 1997 onward, even as my partners and I founded Gearbox Software, I was just like everyone else, watching the development of *Duke Nukem Forever* as a fan from the outside, hoping that one day I would get a chance to play a worthy sequel.



RG: Why were you so keen on getting hold of *Duke Nukem Forever*?

RP: Well, I think it's more about wishing only the best for the legend and being in a position where my studio and I can do something substantive to help. It's like driving down the road and seeing the car in front of you get into a really bad wreck. What are you going to do? Just drive away? Or will you stop to get out and help? Now imagine that the people inside that car that crashed are people that you care about – people that you feel have helped you in an earlier time. And, imagine that you're not driving a car, but an ambulance that has all the equipment necessary to deal with exactly the sort of situation. And imagine inside your ambulance with you are loads of doctors and surgeons and medical emergency professionals. And then imagine you're not on some busy highway, but out in the desert and there is no one around for hundreds of miles and if you didn't stop to help, no one would. That's sort of how I felt about the situation; it didn't really feel like I had a choice.

RG: Is it true that the core game was finished and you're working on the ports and the multiplayer?

RP: It's a difficult question for me to want to answer, simply because the real answer is complex and I don't want to take anything away from the people at 3D Realms who really drove the vision for the game and got it to the point where the vision could be realised. I certainly don't want to take anything away from the eight intrepid developers who instead of moving on and getting new jobs, worked with no income out of their houses to do everything they could to assemble the disparate parts and fill in the blanks and provide a cohesive experience. At the same time, the effort that has gone in over the last 15 months or so to help fully realise that vision is incredible, heroic developer stuff, and nothing should be said that takes anything away from their contributions either. It's absolutely correct to say, though, that *Duke Nukem Forever* is the game that is the vision and labour of 3D Realms and the people and teams that have been a part of that studio over the years. It's the game that we've always wanted to play and the game we've always deserved. All of the efforts that I've motivated and enabled and driven have been efforts designed to make sure that vision is fully realised so that we can all finally play it and enjoy it.

RG: How does it feel finishing off a project that's been in development for such a long time?

RP: Ask me again in a couple of months. Right now, it feels like we've got a lot of work left to do, but we're in the home stretch. It's exciting and terrifying and suspenseful and invigorating.

RG: So, when are you starting work on *Duke Nukem Forever 2*?

RP: No, no, no. It's not called *Duke Nukem Forever 2*. It's called *Duke Nukem Five-ever*. Development for that fifth game started in 2003, so we've got another half a decade or so before we should expect it to be ready!

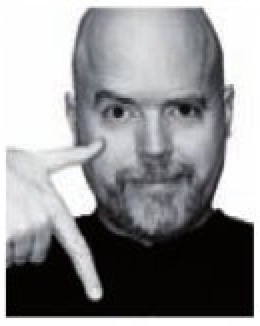
of the game also appeared on the Nintendo 64. Developed by Eurocom, which had previously delivered us a successful but heavily censored N64 port of *Duke 3D* with *Duke Nukem 64*, *Duke Nukem: Zero Hour* was essentially an updated version of *Time To Kill* but with fancier graphics – helped by its compatibility with the console's Expansion Pak, which allowed the game to be displayed in a high-res mode ruined by crippling slowdown – and different time periods for Duke to explore: the present day, post-apocalypse, the near future, the Wild West and Victorian London. With a carbon copy plot to *Time To Kill*, the main differences between the games were basically this: *Zero Hour* looked nicer, featured a first-person mode, supported four-player deathmatches compared to *Time To Kill*'s two, and added a few more weapons, many of which were drip fed to the player over the course of the game.

In 2000, n-Space released a direct follow-up to *Time To Kill*. *Duke Nukem: Land Of The Babes* kept with the time-travelling theme of recent instalments, but this time, rather than the past, the game set itself in the future. With men now extinct and women forced to be sex objects by an alien race, the future had become a pretty miserable place for what remains of the human race. That is until a few escape, form a resistance called the UBR – which, in case you're wondering, stood for United Babe Resistance – and find an old time machine in order to send somebody back in time to bring Duke to the future. His new mission: wipe out the alien enslavers and, we assume, bring back mankind from extinction. *Land Of The Babes* kept the successful gameplay of its predecessor, with the challenge ramped up a little, a few new weapons thrown into the mix, and a less enjoyable multiplayer mode that for no good reason did away with computer-controlled bots. And that's about all we have to say about the game.

By 2000, PC owners were understandably getting a little annoyed by the absence of a proper *Duke Nukem* sequel. In fact, all poor PC-owning *Duke* fans were living off was the promise that *Duke Nukem Forever* would one day be coming and would be worth waiting for. In December of this year, however, a glimmer of hope came by way of Take-Two Interactive purchasing the *DNF* publishing rights from Infogrames. This was followed by a new *DNF* trailer unveiled at E3 in 2001, and the announcement by the publisher that the game would be with us in 2002. As we all know by now, the game failed to materialise that year, but two new



id ON DUKE



TOM HALL

I was at 3D Realms when [*Duke 3D*] was being made. I had been creative director over *Duke Nukem II*, made up the bosses, and after talking with George, really emphasised Duke's vanity.

People were working on the original then playing *Doom* after hours. I told George this was a bad sign, and something had to be done. So he took the game over and drove it to be the awesome classic it was. Late in the game, I did small work on it – I did the story and came up with the idea for Tripbombs, I think. But [...] all the guys hit it really out of the park.

I love that the deathmatch had a sense of space. Landmarks. It was the first FPS where you were really oriented, and that voice made the character come alive. That he reacted to specific things happening and stuff in the environment was fun, and most often hilarious.

Duke Nukem games did, ending a five-year absence of the character from PCs and also seeing him return to the FPS genre.

THE YEAR HE CAME HOME!

Duke Nukem: Manhattan Project, which saw the franchise returned to the capable hands of Sunstorm Interactive, was a side-scrolling shooter that felt like a glossy update of the original *Duke Nukem* EGA games. In fact, supporting this assessment, it was planned at the start of the game's development that Dr Proton, the villain from the first game, would be returning to the franchise as the game's antagonist. However, with the character also rumoured to be appearing in *Duke Nukem Forever* at the time, that idea was dropped and a brand new evil genius named Mech Morphix replaced him. Furthermore, the game follows a similar plot to the Duke's first appearance, except this time rather than an army of robots overthrowing the city it's an army of bipedal mutant animals. Refreshingly, time-travelling aliens are nowhere to be seen in this game.

In the same year that *Manhattan Project* was released, so too was the first new *Duke Nukem* FPS in six years. It went largely unnoticed on release and this is probably because most people mistook *Duke Nukem Advance* for a simple port of the original *Duke 3D* – having identical box art would certainly confuse matters – but in actual fact it's a completely new *Duke Nukem* FPS.

While its levels were filled with reused sprites from the original and now six-year-old *Duke Nukem 3D*, they were all new in their design. With many of them being real-world settings, this new mission saw Duke trotting the globe from Area 51, across Egypt, to Sydney, Australia – the game's developer, Torus Games, is based in Melbourne – with the mission ending aboard an alien ship. As a good showcase of the impressive capabilities of the Game Boy Advance and a decent *Duke Nukem* game, we're pleased to report that it succeeds in both respects and is definitely worth checking out if it passed you by first time.

So 2002 brought us two new *Duke Nukem* games but still no *Duke Forever*. In fact, so sure were the media that the game was never going to see release, in 2004 *DNF* was awarded an honorary lifetime achievement award in *Wired*'s annual Vaporware Awards. And following continued assurances by 3D Realms that the game was nearing completion right up until 2008, still there was no game. So, in 2009, when 3D Realms made the shock announcement that it would be closing its doors, many believed that this signalled the final death knell for *DNF*, and perhaps even for the Duke himself. However, not everyone felt this way, particularly those closest to him.

When 3D Realms closed, there were a few former employees that still clung to the belief that *Duke Nukem Forever* could be finished. George Broussard was one of them, and he and a number of former 3D Realms staffers passionately began trying to finish the game from out of their own homes.

Then a lifeline, in the form of Gearbox Software boss Randy Pitchford. A former 3D Realms employee, Randy had moved to Texas to work on the original *Duke Nukem 3D* before leaving the company in 1997 and, after a period working for the now-defunct studio Rebel Boat Rocker, co-founded his own successful Texas-based studio, Gearbox Software. Feeling a moral duty to help Duke in his time of need, in 2009 Randy led a deal that saw Gearbox purchase the rights to the *Duke Nukem* franchise and assist in getting *DNF* finished and released. The unveiling and announcement by Gearbox of Duke's shock resurrection took place at the Penny Arcade Expo last year, and the news was met by thousands of slack jaws.

This year promises to finally bring closure to 14 long years for *Duke Nukem* fans. The FPS genre has changed significantly in that time, and while there will be many gamers anxiously awaiting Duke's triumphant return, there will be others who feel that there might no longer be a place for Duke in today's somewhat serious, technology and realism-obsessed FPS landscape. Just so you know, though, we don't agree with them. Hail to the king, baby.



THE OTHER DUKE NUKEM FOREVER

Not many people are aware of this, but after the release of *Duke 3D*, 3D Realms set to work on a new side-scrolling 2D *Duke Nukem* game and confusingly titled it *Duke Nukem Forever*. According to a few online sources, the game was going to be a reboot of the original 2D games. Now whether this was intended to be the original direction of the sequel to *Duke 3D* is uncertain, but we think it highly unlikely. To cut a long story short, the game eventually turned into another game at 3D Realms, changed names several times and was eventually sold to Inner Circle Creations, which tinkered with it some more before finally releasing the game as *Alien Rampage* for the PC in 1996.



"RANDY PITCHFORD FELT A MORAL DUTY TO HELP DUKE IN HIS TIME OF NEED"



» [N64] While everyone waited for *Duke Forever*, a number of console spin-offs were released. Most were third-person shooters with a time-travel theme.



» [PC] *Duke Nukem: Manhattan Project* was the last big *Duke Nukem* game to see release and returned the character to his 2D shooter roots.



PC-Genjin

FANCY A BONK?

» RETROREVIVAL



» PC ENGINE
» RED COMPANY
» 1990

Sometimes you see a game featured in a magazine and know that you just have to have it, no matter what the cost. Viewing *PC Kid* in *CVG* was one of those times.

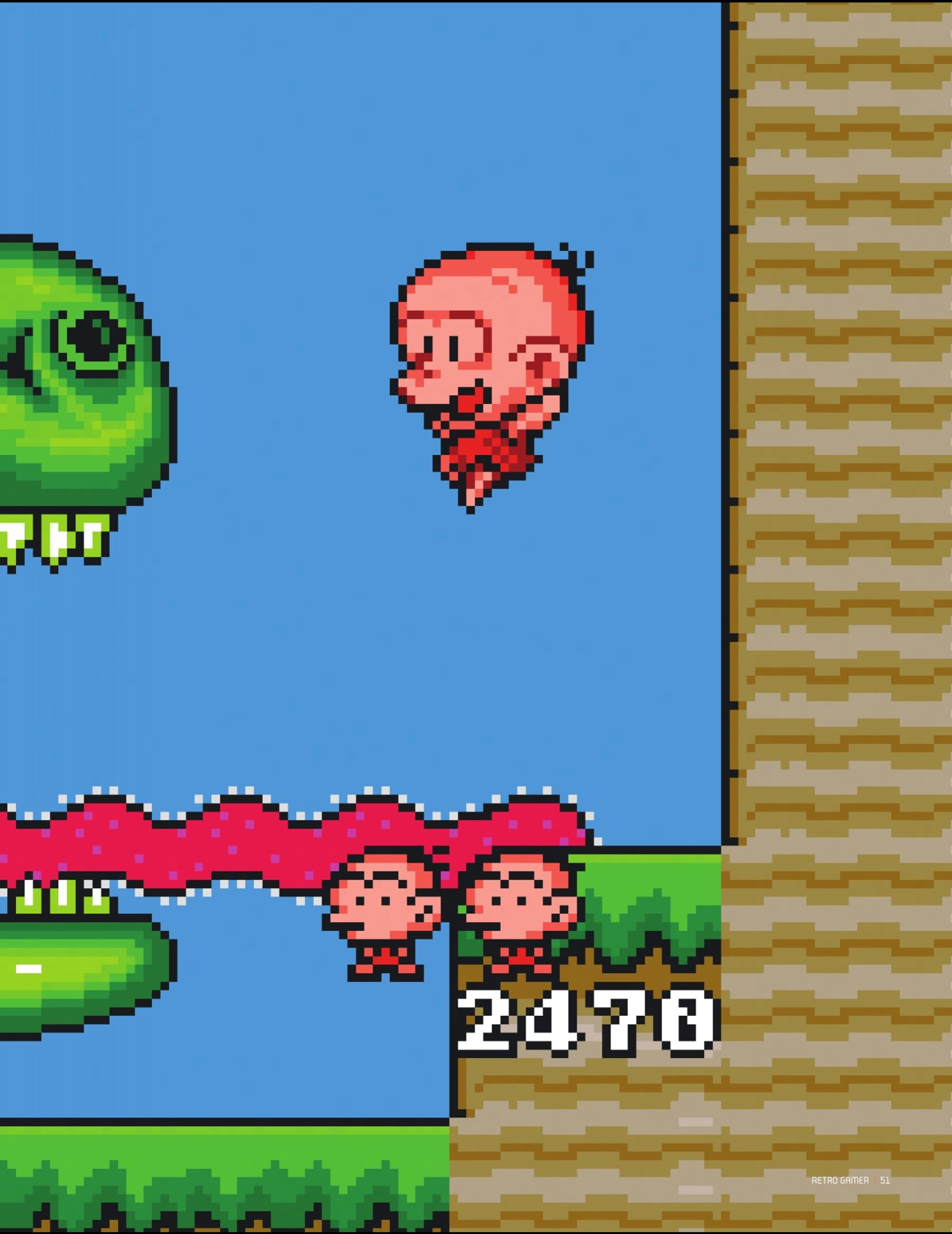
I'd already been drawn to the machine due to the likes of *Gunhed* and the astonishing-looking port of *R-Type*, and I would impatiently wait for each new issue in the hope of more PC Engine goodness.

Unfortunately, the PC Engine's high price tag ensured that I wouldn't be able to treat myself to a machine until I was a working adult, and when I finally bought myself a PC Engine GT – I love handhelds – *PC-Genjin*, or *Bonk's Adventure* as it was hilariously known in the States, was one of the first games I picked up for it.

I wasn't disappointed either, as it's a truly wonderful platformer. Then, of course, there's Bonk himself – or PC Kid, as I'd always called him. Packed with Mario's charm and Sonic's irrepressible cool, he became something of a figurehead for NEC's tiny machine and went on to star in numerous sequels and spin-offs.

But that first game, especially when viewed on the PC Engine GT's glorious little screen, was where it all began for me, and I was not disappointed with the end result. The bright, cheerful backgrounds, cute animation and excellent audio didn't look aged when I first played the game in 2002 – yes, it took that long for me to finally get a machine – and it still looks great now. Gameplay is admittedly simplistic, but it remains fun to play thanks to its well-structured level design, great variety in its environments and its entertaining nature. Mario may have had his bottom bounce and Sonic his spin dash, but PC Kid had a devastating head butt that could always be guaranteed to raise a smile. After all, who doesn't like running around, nutting dinosaurs?

While the sequels were arguably better games, I'll always have a special fondness for the original. In fact, this spread is an approximation of the very first screenshot I ever saw of it. That's how much of an impact it had on me back in the day. *


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FROM THE ARCHIVES

RETRO GAMER DIGS UP THE FILES OF THE CLASSIC COMPANIES OF OLD

Incentive Software

Renowned for its quality and dedication to original titles, Reading-based Incentive Software hugely influenced gaming while producing some groundbreaking games and utilities. Graeme Mason discovers more…

Speaking to Ian Andrew, founder of Incentive Software, it's obvious he has always been a man in control of his own destiny. From the headquarters of his present company, Traffic Names Ltd, in Fleet, Hampshire, the former 8-bit entrepreneur exudes a sense of calm authority that was no doubt advantageous during the turbulent early years of the computer software market. Dressed in a light, tie-less suit that betrays the mild October weather outside, we start by asking him about the birth of one of the most successful and influential software companies of the Eighties.

"It began with my shop in London Street, Reading, selling stamps and collectable picture postcards," he explains with an obvious sense of pride, "which was an expansion of a business I had previously been running from my parents' house." Opening this type of dedicated shop may seem strange today, but as Ian notes: "There was no internet or eBay back then, so selling stamps and picture cards by mail order and then from the shop was big business." Not as big as the growing computer game industry, however, and so I Andrew (Cards), the first shop in Britain to specialise in the selling of Post Office postcards, which had opened early in 1983 with a buffet reception attended by 60 fellow enthusiasts and the curator of the National Postal Museum in London, was transformed shortly afterwards into the home of Incentive Software.

It's easy to conclude with the benefit of hindsight that this was a natural step for Ian: he was one of the first people to buy a ZX81 following an advertisement in the *Daily Mail* and also purchased one of the earliest ZX Spectrums. Ian had quickly put his computer to work as well, masterminding the cunning strategy title *Mined-Out*, which was published by Quicksilva in late 1982 to good reviews and solid sales. His idea with the game was to create something original and playable that stood out from the rest of the market, a theme that would remain as his career – and Incentive's rise – progressed.

Added Incentive

The royalties received from Quicksilva for *Mined-Out* swiftly eclipsed Ian's regular income and persuaded him to sell the postcard business to a fellow deltiologist and enter the burgeoning game software market with his own label.

The genesis of the name of the company itself was simple: "Basically, I chose Incentive as the company name because I decided we wanted to offer an added incentive to our customers," he explains. To this aim, the company's first title, *Splat!*, programmed by Ian himself along with machine coding from Ian Morgan, who was recruited via an advert in the *Reading Post*, offered a reward of £500 to the person who achieved the highest score. "It may not have been the first game to offer a prize, but we prided ourselves on offering achievable prizes," notes Ian Andrew, "and it was very successful in promoting the game."

INSTANT EXPERT

Ian Andrew first came to attention with the excellent Sinclair Spectrum strategy title *Mined-Out* for Quicksilva, an interesting forebear to the ubiquitous *Minesweeper*.

The name Incentive sprung from his desire to give customers an added incentive to buy his games.

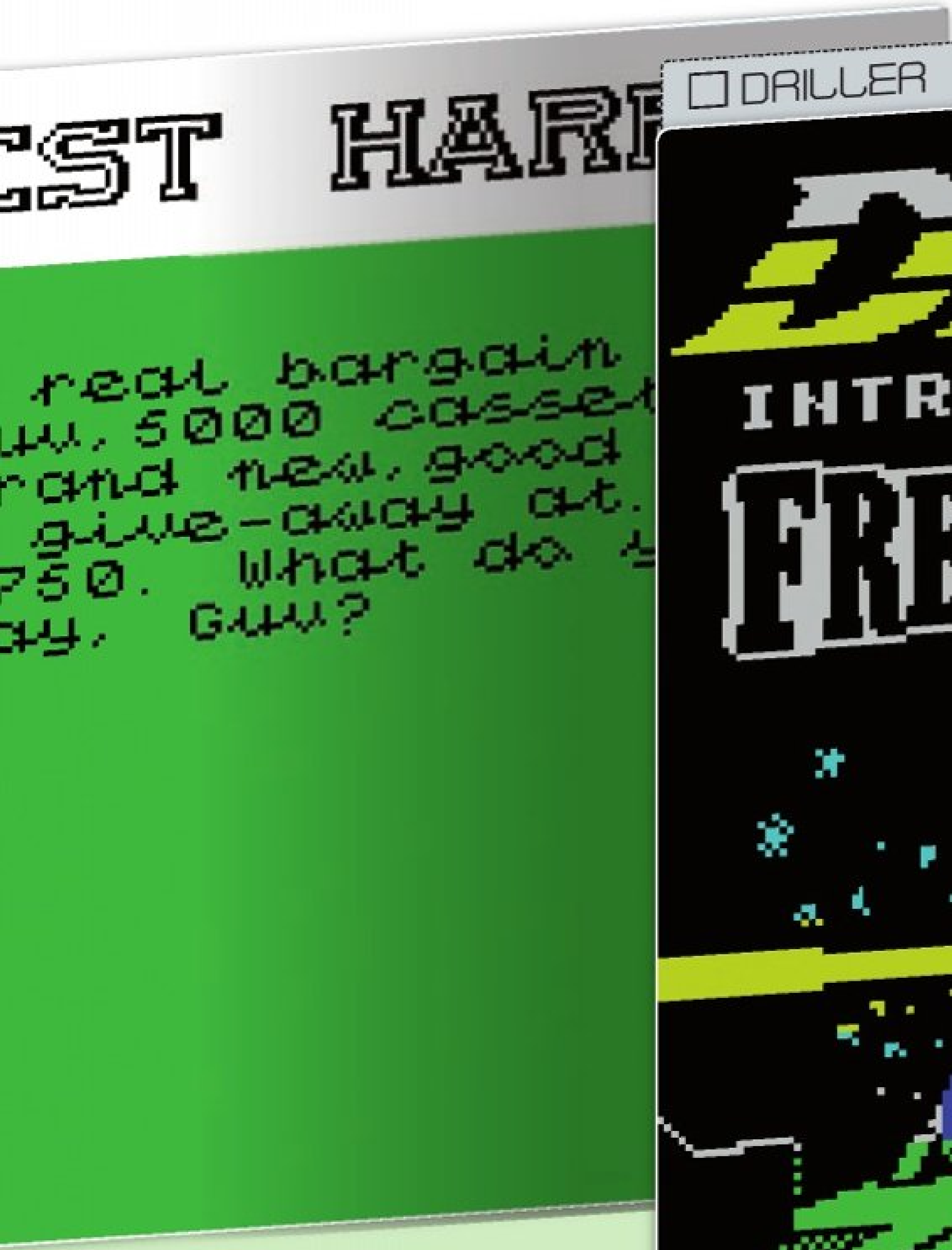
Incentive's first game, *Splat!*, came fourth in the most original game category of the 1983 Golden Joystick awards, behind such luminaries as Ultimate's *Pssst*, *Ant Attack*, and the winner: Imagine's *Ah Diddums*.

***Moon Cresta* and** the Amstrad version of The Graphic Adventure Creator saw Incentive utilise the infamous Lenslok copy protection.

A text-only version of The Graphic Adventure Creator appeared on the Acorn Electron, renamed The Adventure Creator.

Freescape marked the creation of Incentive's first in-house programming team, Major Developments. Originally consisting of Ian and his brother Chris, further members included Stephen Northcott, Paul Gregory, Kevin Parker, Sean Ellis and Eugene Messina.

Having morphed into Superscape by 1994 and moved into business applications, Incentive was bought by mobile game specialist GLU in 2008.







» The original I Andrew (Cards) shop.

The company slowly expanded, with the office still based in Ian's old card shop. Darryl Still was recruited to help with marketing, administration and accounts, while Dave Baines – "fortunate" recipient of the Incentive-embossed company Sinclair C5 – looked after the technical side as well as more manual tasks such as packing cassettes and filing. "At this stage there were no staff programmers," says Ian. "All the games were written by freelancers who were paid royalties. It worked pretty well."

Next for Incentive was *The Ket Trilogy*, a set of three text adventures and an interesting nod to future projects. Written by Richard McCormack, a *Dungeons & Dragons*-obsessed friend of Ian Morgan's, it also offered a prize for the first person to complete it: a top-of-the-range video recorder. The competitions were already a promotional boon: pictures of a beaming Ian Andrew handing over the fulsome rewards regularly adorned the news pages of most computing magazines.

" I decided we wanted to offer an added incentive to our customers "

IAN ANDREW ON HOW HE CHOSE THE NAME

An unusual office

The idiosyncratic shop was proving to be an interesting base of operations. "It was £80-a-week rent and a five-storey building that was about to be demolished," remembers Ian with a smile, "the only drawback being that we only had it for two years until the demolition order and no rights to stay." The building was an adequate, if unconventional, base for the new software house: a shop front – which, in time, began to house several of Ian's arcade machines – led through to a back office and kitchen, while on the first and second floors were several bedrooms, a bathroom and a lounge. "To be honest, it was very run-down, but we had some good parties there," says Ian, and one such occasion almost led to disaster. "One night, seeking respite from a particularly raucous party, I came downstairs and noticed the ceiling in the shop visibly bulging from the goings-on upstairs! We had to get an acro prop up pretty quickly to avoid any unfortunate accidents."

Darryl Still's key memories during his 18 months at Incentive were also of the building: "It wasn't really fit for its purpose. The basement was filled from ceiling to floor with magazines and a potential firetrap," he notes, "but it was fun working with some very talented coders in what was a very haphazard environment by today's standards."

Ian Morgan recalls: "Incentive was my first job after leaving school and I started officially in September 1983. I used to love playing on Ian's collection of pinball and arcade machines, especially my favourite, *Tempest*. There was always a steady stream of visitors into the shop, all eager to play our games on the computer we ▶

BY THE NUMBERS

2: Number of years Incentive had at the London Street office before it was due for demolition

5: Amount in pence, per copy, paid by Incentive for the innovative holographic cover insert for *Splat!*

6: Official Freescape games released by Incentive, including the sequels to *Total Eclipse* and *Castle Master*

14: Months it took the Major Developments team to complete *Driller*

92.5: Average percentage score of the Freescape games reviewed in *Crash* magazine

£500: Won by James Tant, winner of the inaugural Incentive competition for his high score on *Splat!*

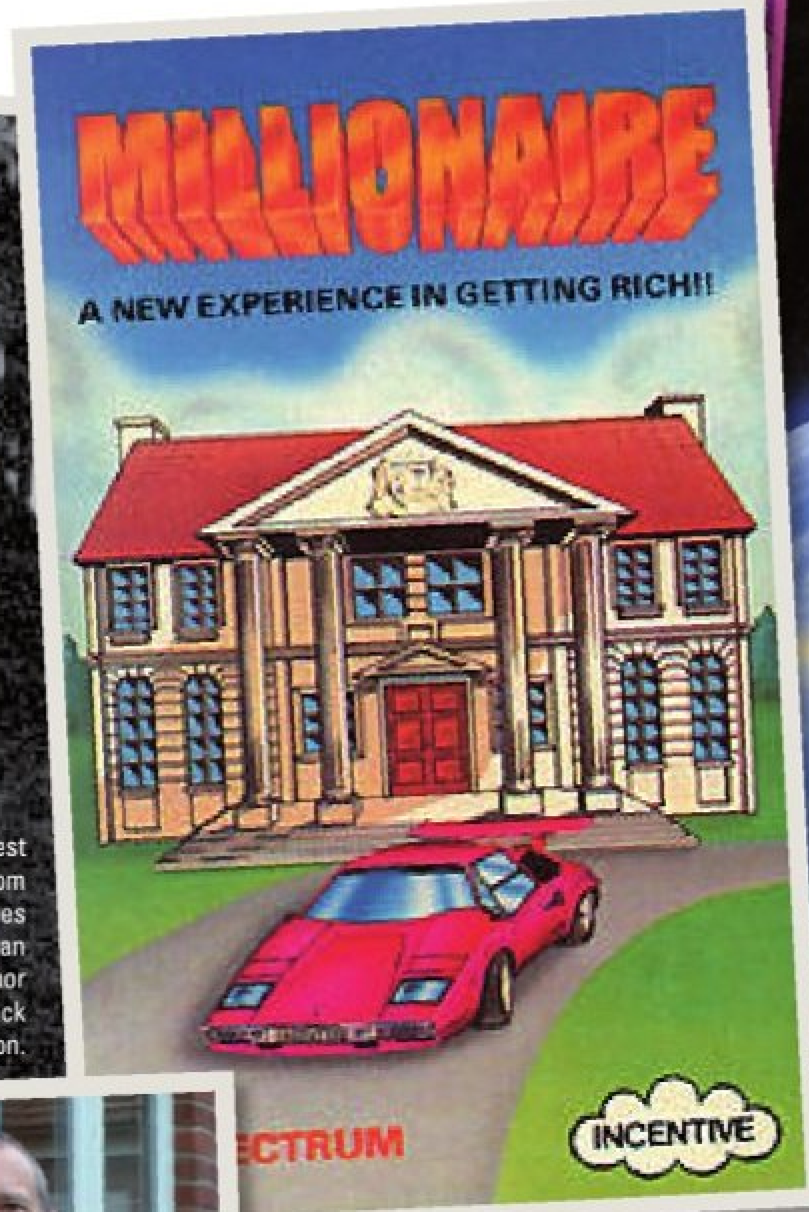
638: The machine number of Ian Andrew's first ZX Spectrum.

£1,000: Cost for Incentive to secure the *Moon Cresta* licence

112,930: The *Splat!* high score that earned James Tant his prize



» 'Britain's Best Adventurer' Tom Frost receives his prize from Ian Andrew, with author Richard McCormack looking on.





» Incentive splashed out on a huge box for *Driller*.

had set up." With *Splat!* done and dusted, Morgan spent much of his time handling the mail order side of the business, and many days involved nothing else but packing the tapes and shiny covers of Incentive's debut effort, before having the honour of personally delivering the first order to the local distribution centre.

The Incentive catalogue was growing now as more programmers sent in their work or ideas. *Splat!*, *1984*, *The Ket Trilogy* and *Millionaire* all gave evidence that Incentive was going to be no ordinary games company: an arcade maze game; a government simulation; a trilogy of text adventures, not forgetting McCormack's ambitious RPG-style combat system; and a software house simulator. Unlike many of its peers, it was apparent that Incentive had no plans to produce arcade rip-offs, which brings us to the next game in its canon.

"I noticed that a lot of companies were bringing out games that were simply clones of either existing games or, rather, arcade machines," remembers Ian, "so I set out to do something different again and actually try and get the official rights to an arcade game." His gaze fell upon the classic arcade shooter *Moon Cresta* from Nichibutsu, which he approached for the rights on all the home computer systems. "They seemed quite surprised because they'd never been approached by anyone from the home computer industry before, so had assumed that there wasn't any money in it." Sensing a potential deal, Ian asked the company's UK MD what price he had in mind for the worldwide home computer rights. "He said it had to be at least £1,000 to make it worth all the paperwork – so £1,000 it was!"

Moon Cresta became a top seller, with versions appearing on the Amstrad CPC, BBC, Commodore 64, ZX Spectrum and Dragon 32. Timothy Walter and Philip Taglione produced the accurate conversion by just playing and studying the arcade original with Taglione's brother, Anthony, and C64 expert Malcolm Hellon supplying the powerload code that reduced loading times and made the game harder to pirate. Licensing out the powerload code also provided another string to Incentive's bow.

Moving on

At this point in time – spring 1985 – Incentive was being forced out of its home for the first two years and moving to a more practical business park located in nearby Aldermaston. Some of Ian's earlier colleagues had moved on – including the ambitious Darryl Still, who formed his own development company, and Ian Morgan to an IBM dealer two doors down from the London Street office – and the success of *Moon Cresta* had him in two minds as to which direction to take. Ultimately the decision was clear: Incentive's policy of producing challenging and original software meant artistic control was a necessity, so the fledgling console market was a no – as was the licensing of other properties, whether it be further arcade conversions or movie and TV adaptations.

With Paul Shirley's classy puzzle game *Confuzion* selling well, Incentive was now looking for the next genre to explore, and its links with Reading University now paid dividends as a relationship was forged with first-year student Sean Ellis. As Sean himself explains: "Just before Christmas '84 I was attending the Reading University Computer Club and they had an evening with these guys from a local software company. I met Ian and told him about an adventure game system I had been playing around with on the Amstrad. Full credit to him as it wasn't in the best state, yet he was able to see through this and visualise the potential."

The reason was simple: always with one eye on his competitors' products, Ian's attention had been drawn to the adventure-creating utility The Quill. This popular program enabled users with little

> **"He said it had to be at least £1,000 to make it worth the paperwork"**
>
> IAN ANDREW ON ACQUIRING THE MOON CRESTA LICENCE

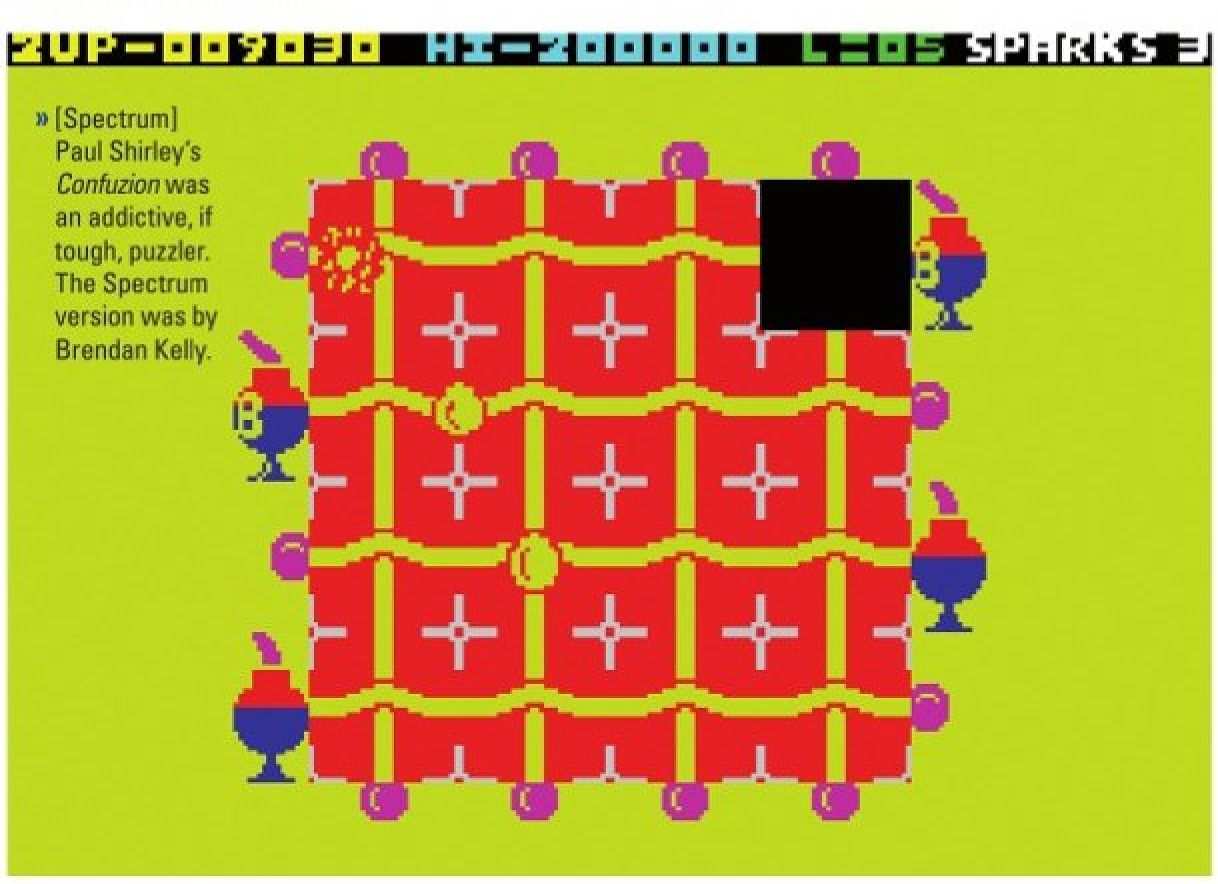


A WINNER SPEAKS!

"It was the mid-Eighties: I had left school, there were no jobs and basically I had little better to do than play Spectrum games," reminisces James Tant, winner of the first Incentive competition for his *Splat!* high score. "I had to go to their office in Reading to play the game and prove my score and actually exceeded it."

But did it change his life?

"No, not really," he concludes "although I did use the money to help pay for my first car – an MG Maestro!"



» [Spectrum] Paul Shirley's *Confuzion* was an addictive, if tough, puzzler. The Spectrum version was by Brendan Kelly.

TIMELINE

1982 — *MINED-OUT*, IAN ANDREW'S FIRST GAME, IS RELEASED BY QUICKSILVA TO CRITICAL AND COMMERCIAL SUCCESS.

1983 — THE I ANDREW (CARDS) SHOP IN LONDON STREET, READING, OPENS, ONLY TO BE TRANSFORMED INTO INCENTIVE HQ A FEW MONTHS LATER. THE FIRST WAVE OF GAMES SEES *SPLAT!*, *MOUNTAINS OF KET* AND *1984* RELEASED.

1984 — DARRYL STILL AND DAVE BAINES JOIN INCENTIVE. SOFTWARE HOUSE SIMULATION *MILLIONAIRE* APPEARS ALONG WITH THE SECOND AND THIRD CHAPTERS OF *THE KET TRILOGY*, AND IAN ANDREW MEETS SEAN ELLIS AT THE READING UNIVERSITY COMPUTER CLUB.

1985 — A BUSY YEAR FOR INCENTIVE AND WITH THE DEMOLITION ORDER ON 54 LONDON STREET IMMINENT, THE COMPANY MOVES TO NEARBY ALDERMASTON. THE ARCADE CONVERSION OF *MOON CRESTA* DOES THE BUSINESS ALONG WITH PAUL SHIRLEY'S *CONFUZION*, CONVERTED TO THE SPECTRUM BY BRENDAN KELLY. IAN MORGAN AND DARRYL STILL MOVE ON TO PASTURES NEW.

1987 — FREESCAPE TAKES A BOW WITH THE RELEASE OF *DRILLER* TO WIDE ACCLAIM. ALSO THIS YEAR, ANDY TAIT JOINS INCENTIVE FROM VIRGIN GAMES TO HELP PROMOTE THE FREESCAPE TITLES AS WELL AS LICENSING OUT THE BACK CATALOGUE TO OTHER PUBLISHERS.

1990 — INCENTIVE INKS A DEAL WITH DOMARK TO PUBLISH THE 3D CONSTRUCTION KITS.

1992 — THE INCENTIVE NAME FINALLY DISAPPEARS TO BE REPLACED BY DIMENSION INTERNATIONAL, AND EVENTUALLY SUPERSCAPE VR.

2000 — IAN ANDREW LEAVES SUPERSCAPE, THUS ENDING 17 YEARS AT THE HELM.

programming knowledge to create their own adventures – albeit with no graphics. These were possible, however, with the aid of another utility, The Illustrator, which predictably made the process much more complex. "We were quite aware of [The Quill's] shortcomings, in terms of it being a bit cumbersome to use with The Illustrator," says Ian, "and having spotted this we encouraged Sean to write his utility combining the two aspects."

It was certainly a departure for Incentive that surprised many, not that it affected sales, remembers Ian happily: "It was very successful for us, actually, and a lot of this was down to our good relationship with Book Club Associates."

The BCA had been operating for some time distributing books via a mail-order club when the Swindon-based company decided to open a division selling computer software. The remit was identical to its book club: a hugely tempting opening offer with dozens of titles at a fraction of their RRP, followed by a regular magazine with somewhat less awe-inspiring savings. To make program of the month almost guaranteed a title's success thanks to the high profile it would receive in the magazine, and The Graphic Adventure Creator's relatively high price of £22.95 compared to £8-9 for most games was, in Ian's mind, a key factor in the BCA selecting it for this honour.

The Graphic Adventure Creator was a huge success. Budding adventure enthusiasts up and down the country took to its simple, intuitive system, and Incentive created the Medallion label to publish some of their games. As Ian states: "One of the edges of the GAC was that you could be a non-programmer and create games, so I thought it was important for us to publish some of these games to show publicly that it could be used to make decent adventures." Several fan-produced games appeared on Incentive's Medallion label, with the best-received being *Karyssia, Queen Of Diamonds* by Darren Shacklady and Peter Torrance's *Legend Of The Apache Gold*. Yet despite these two titles, many of the other adventures published by Incentive were not the most original in concept and marked a nadir in the quality of the company's releases.



» [Amiga] *Total Eclipse* changed the Freescape setting to Thirties Egypt.

The next big thing

With the GAC still being promoted, Ian was already working on Incentive's next project. Free movement within solid 3D graphics on 8-bit computers had long been a holy grail for ambitious developers everywhere. Late in 1986, Incentive decided it was a challenge it would be worthy of. Additionally, Ian was keen to develop a suitable project for the embryonic 16-bit market that would take advantage of their superior processing power.

"The original idea for Freescape was conceived in 1985, but we didn't start writing it until September 1986 when it was clear computer technology was moving on," tells Ian. The concept also marked the end of a long and successful association with freelance programmers: "The only way we could do something like Freescape was to have all those involved in the same place, hence the creation of an in-house team, Major Developments, which initially consisted of myself and my brother Chris."

Freescape – a combination of the words 'freedom' and 'landscape' – took 14 months to develop, and it didn't always go smoothly. "There were lots of niggling technical issues – but it was constantly being driven by the fact we needed a new niche," says Ian, "and we were aware of what everyone else was doing, so the decision I took was to really invest and create an engine that could build games that were unique in some way." It was a risky strategy committing so much effort into a project that was not guaranteed to succeed, especially

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



Ian Andrew



Darryl Still

Ian Andrew After leaving Superscape in 2000, Ian started up Traffic Names, an umbrella company for several websites including domain name sales (**www.dotcomagency.com**) and games (**www.originalgames.com**).

Chris Andrew Works with his brother at Traffic Names.

Ian Morgan After leaving Incentive in 1985, Ian began work at a nearby IBM dealership. Today he runs his own business, a children's nursery.



Ian Morgan

Sean Ellis The man behind the Graphic Adventure Creator left Superscape in 2006 after almost 18 years with the company and is now at ARM, working on software for its Mali line of mobile graphics processors.

Richard McCormack *The Ket Trilogy* remains Richard's sole contribution to gaming but set him up for a career in computing. He now works in California as a marketing VP for Fujitsu.

Darryl Still After leaving Incentive in 1985, Darryl started his own software development company and has since worked at many famous names including Atari, Electronic Arts and Nvidia. He is now international publishing director for Russian Games company 1C UK Ltd.

Andy Tait The former Virgin Games marketing guru went on to lead sales in several Superscape projects, including the first ever Lego software products. He left in 2004 and now works for Pembridge Partners, a company specialising in digital and creative investments.

Malcolm Hellon Commodore 64 expert Malcolm was tempted by Mike Singleton to join his new company, Maelstrom Games, in 1987, before moving to MicroProse UK in 1989 and designing the graphics for the game *F-19 Stealth Fighter*. Since 2000 he has run his own company specialising in advanced developments for embedded systems and, yes, he's still working on *Interstellar Overdrive*!



Chris Andrew

SIX OF THE BEST



Splat! (1983)
Ian Andrew and Incentive prided themselves on original concepts, and they started as they meant to go on with this frantic maze game. Guide Zippy around the walls and other obstacles and see if you can beat James Tant's high score.



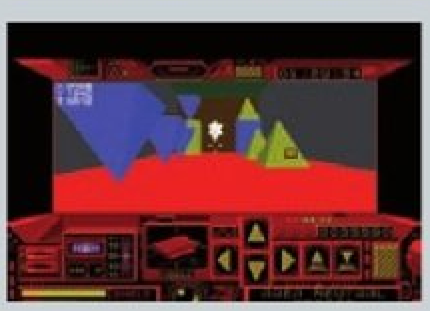
Back Track (1983)
This top-down 3D game from Chris Andrew was even more impressive considering that it was squeezed into the Dragon 32. At heart a simple maze game, its speed, graphics and playability set it apart from the crowd.



Moon Cresta (1985)
The arcade original may have been getting on a bit, but it was still a classic when Incentive bought the rights in 1985. A groundbreaking twist on *Space Invaders*, *Moon Cresta* was just as playable at home as it was in the arcade.



The Graphic Adventure Creator (1986)
Okay, not a game as such, but Sean Ellis's innovative utility allowed you to create them yourself. Its simplicity and ease of use ensured that it became a critical smash and a bestseller for Incentive.

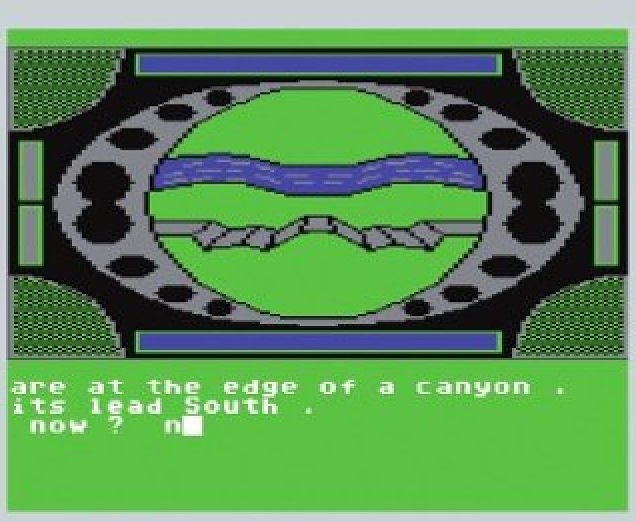


Driller (1987)
The first Freescape game, and the one that stunned everyone, *Driller* offered free movement as the player traversed the moon of Mitral in an attempt to cap the gas pockets and stop it exploding. Atmospheric, intriguing and a true classic.



Castle Master (1990)
For its fifth outing, Incentive was now totally at one with the Freescape concept, and after changing the original sci-fi setting with *Total Eclipse*, moved on to a more traditional fantasy setting for the penultimate Freescape game.

GAMES TO AVOID



Zodiac (1984)
The Medallion label produced a few clunky adventures, and this Commodore 64 effort was one of the worst. A mundane adventure based around the signs of the zodiac, it offered nothing fresh to a fast-bulging genre and notched a below-average 46% in *Zzap!64*.

1984 (1983)
John Hunt's government simulation was well-reviewed back in 1983 but has not aged well. Its ambition is clear, but the frustrating number-guessing elements and long, slow periods of play make it a far cry from the instant joy of action games such as *Splat!* and *Moon Cresta*.



"We felt we'd pushed Freescape as much as we could"

IAN ANDREW ON THE GENESIS OF THE 3D CONSTRUCTION KIT

considering the extent of the job on the 8-bit computers – machines that were still selling extremely well. "The traditional way of doing 3D games was by using z-buffering, which is how you order the things in a 3D environment," explains Ian, "by essentially working out the nearest object to the viewpoint for every pixel – a hugely processor-intensive method."

The Major Developments team knew they had to find new ways around this process if they were to realise Freescape to its full potential. One key breakthrough was a technique called box-sorting, whereby each individual element was held within a bounding box, which enabled the z-order to be completed with one check rather than the thousands involved for each individual pixel. This and other tricks permitted the Freescape games to run in real-time – or at least one frame per second on the 8-bit computers. Ian credits his brother with much of the effort that went into creating the original engine: "He was the basis of Freescape really. He used assembler rather than C and a unique sorting system, which enabled it to become reality," says Ian, "while I was mainly responsible for the design of the game thanks to a rudimentary hex utility that allowed me to insert game logic into Chris's program. It was hugely rewarding and an aspect of the games that had been lost to me over the years, despite my love of game design."

Incentive developed a deliberate, slow pace to *Driller*. An in-depth science fiction background story was devised that involved the player travelling across the moon of Mitral and placing drilling rigs over dangerous gas pockets left by the villainous Ketars. Ian's desire for added value resulted in a large glossy box that contained a lengthy instruction manual and an intriguing map that could be formed into a polyhedral model representing the moon. The game's emphasis was on exploration and considered movement rather than frantic shooting action, which didn't detract one iota from the startlingly enthusiastic reception that *Driller* received. There were occasional dissenting voices over its slow pace – especially on the older machines – but overall the breathtaking ambition of solid 3D graphics and complete freedom of movement stunned gamers and reviewers alike.

Freeing Freescape

Driller's follow-up took another six to nine months to develop, and the plot revolved once more around the devious Ketars. *The Dark Side* also collected favourable reviews, but its similarity in scenario to *Driller* was noted in most magazines – this was acknowledged by Incentive, which changed the scene to Thirties Egypt for the next Freescape adventure, *Total Eclipse*. It was another outstanding success for the company, and Ian returned the favour to the Book Club Associates for its earlier support of the Graphic Adventure Creator by giving it a special double pack including *Eclipse*'s sequel, *The Sphinx Jinx* – a deal repeated with the fourth and final official Freescape game, *Castle Master*, and its respective follow-up. "At this point," remembers Ian, "we felt we'd pushed Freescape as much as we could and we considered it was time



» [Amiga] Freescape was a huge success for Incentive, with *Driller* being the first game to use the engine.



» Team Incentive in 1985: Steve Benfield, Richard McCormack, Malcolm Hellon, Ian Morgan, Anthony Taglione, Darryl Still and Ian Andrew.



» [Amiga] The 3D Construction Kit 2, like the first, was published by Domark, this time on the 16-bits only.



» Messing around with the Domark guys for a *Castle Master* promotional shoot.

to let it go, which led to the creation of the 3D Construction Kit."

The kit, which allowed gamers to create their own Freescape worlds, was surprisingly not published by Incentive, but rival Domark. "It was a chance meeting really, and it was apparent they were looking for new developers," explains Ian, "and from a personal point of view I always preferred the creative side, so I took the view to use another publisher – something we had already done with our Freescape games on the Amiga and Atari ST. Our turnover took a massive hit but our profitability actually went up." And, more importantly for Ian, he was concentrating more on what he enjoyed: being involved in development rather than marketing.

An end to games

History shows that the 3D Construction Kit 2, published on the 16-bit computers in 1992, marked the end of Incentive Software as a publisher and developer, but this was true in name only. Since the release of *Driller*, the Major Developments team had been working on a follow-up engine entitled Superscape. Essentially an updated version of Freescape for the existing 16-bit and emerging 32-bit markets, Incentive was initially unsure how the new system was to be utilised. Ultimately, the hardware of the day made the decision for it.

"Superscape only worked with a special graphics card – at the time a very limited market," says Ian ruefully. "There was a special chip on the card that made it very expensive, so we were writing software for a very specialist type of machine. As a result, it didn't make sense to use it for games."

The Incentive label had by now been quietly retired. Superscape was the new name and one that was even floated on the London Stock Exchange in 1994, marking an end to games software and a new era of business applications and virtual reality projects.

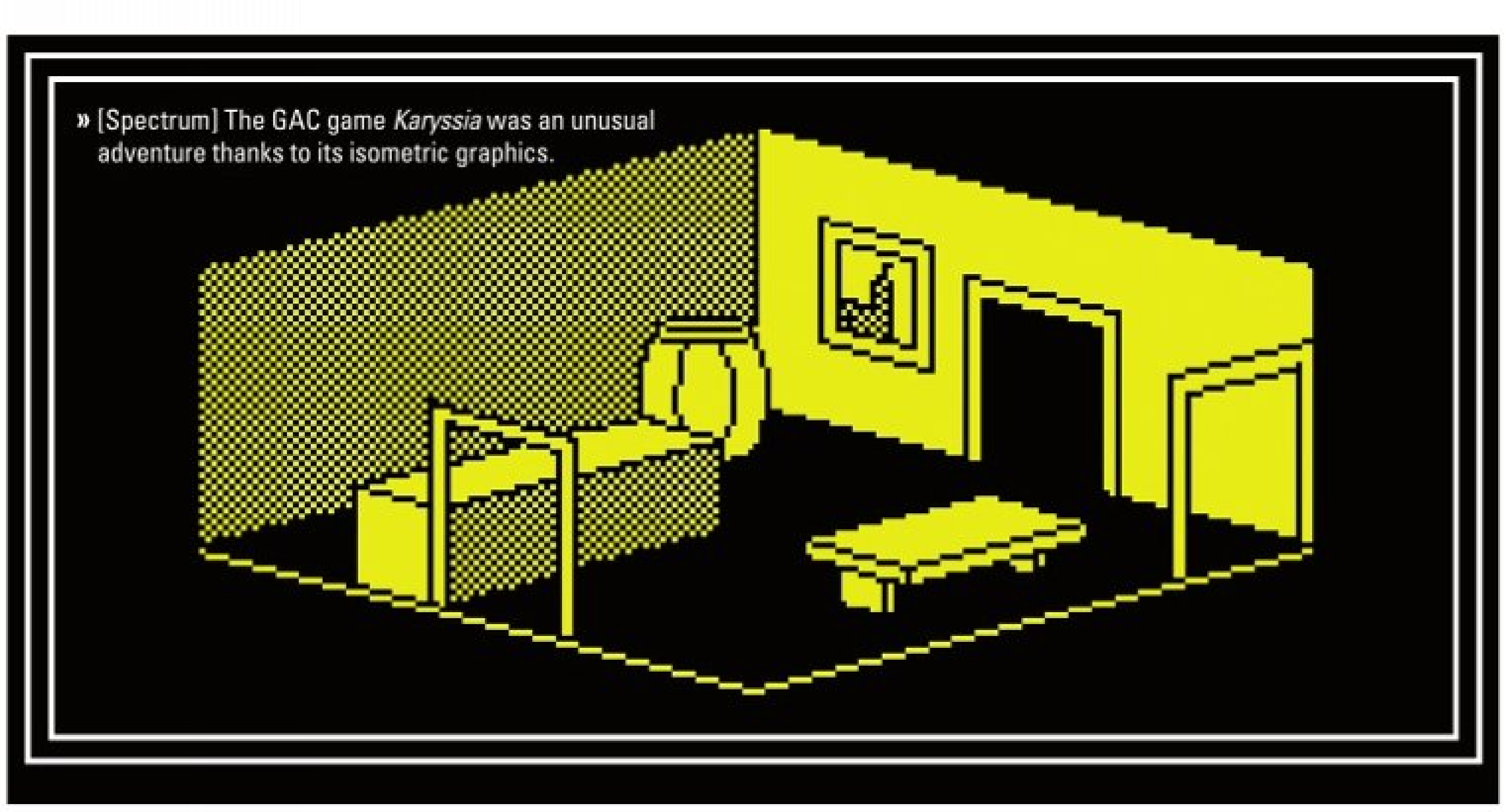
Ian Andrew remained as MD of Superscape until 2000, when he felt that, after 17 years in charge of the company, it was time to move on, and this footnote of Incentive's story was concluded in January 2008 when Superscape was taken over by US mobile phone game specialist GLU.

Despite the success and longevity of Superscape, however, it's clear where Ian's fondest memories lie. "I loved creating games and being involved in the creation process. My and Incentive's idea from the start was to be different," he says, "and it never ceased to amaze me how some companies were releasing games that were effectively the same over again just with alternate graphics, which was fine, but just not for me. I wanted to do something unconventional because it made it more rewarding and worthwhile if it caught on."

The legacy of Incentive is a significant one. The modern era of first-person gaming can be traced all the way back to 1987 and the release of *Driller*, a remarkable achievement on the technology of the time. For this, the enjoyment gained from all of the company's games, and the unleashing of creative minds with the Graphic Adventure Creator and 3D Construction Kits, Ian Andrew and his colleagues should feel justly proud. A dedication to high standards of original and entertaining products and games endeared Incentive Software to many – and earned it a significant few pages in the evolution of computer games.

LIVING WITH INCENTIVE

Commodore 64 owner Malcolm Hellon was walking past the Incentive shop when he noticed a sign in the window requesting programmers for his favourite computer. Incentive had just released *Splat!* and was looking for someone to write a C64 version – for which he duly obliged. Operating under the alias Steve Zodiac, based on an unfounded fear that the game would flop, he went on to help design the Powerload 64 loading scheme and the C64 version of the Graphic Adventure Creator. A year later, circumstances meant he was living on the second floor of Incentive's office: "It had a decent mattress and carpet, which I shared with Ian's table football and pinball machines," says Malcolm, "and those machines made me very popular with my friends!" He used this time to start work on his own game, *Interstellar Overdrive*.



» [Spectrum] The GAC game *Karyssia* was an unusual adventure thanks to its isometric graphics.

Psycho Fox



Despite being part of the most derivative game genre in existence, *Psycho Fox* has become widely known as 'that Master System game with similar gameplay to those other two games'. Those games are, of course, *Kid Kool* and *Magical Flying Hat Turbo Adventure* (rebranded *Decap Attack* in the West), and with all three titles connected by the same developer it's little wonder they're comparable. Still, possibly one of the only games in existence to have two spiritual predecessors which are themselves linked spiritually, and telling the story of a psychotic fox battling a mad one, *Psycho Fox*'s story is certainly bizarre and its lineage somewhat mystifying. Stuart Hunt attempts to make head and tail of this classic 8-bit platformer.



TIGER

The tiger is basically a super-powered version of Psycho Fox. Harnessing the power of the tiger gives Psycho Fox the ability to accelerate faster and jump higher. Human parts are his favourite.



BIRDFLY

In addition to platforming, Psycho Fox and his animal forms can also smash open eggs to free Birdfly: a small, crow-looking companion that can be fired at enemies like a boomerang.

MONKEY

If you want to scale ledges and platforms, the monkey is the animal for you. He can jump higher than all the other animal forms in the game, though he moves slowly to compensate. Bananas are his favourite.



HIPPO

The hippo is the least agile of the three animal forms but does have one useful ability in that he can smash through walls. He's essentially a power character. He has a taste for white plastic marbles.



MEMORABLE MOMENTS

WHY IT'S A CLASSIC



Master System's Mario

With seven worlds, each with hidden areas and multiple paths, *Psycho Fox* featured more to discover than your average SMS platformer. Adding to its charm was its multifaceted hero, who could change into different animals to help him get around. Fox achieves this by collecting magical shinto sticks (aka Psycho Sticks), and uses them to transmute into three other animals, each with different attributes. Proving popular, this character-swapping mechanic appeared in quite a few platform games following *Psycho Fox*'s release – from *Rolo To The Rescue* to the excellent *Kid Chameleon*.

BEST CHARACTER?



Psycho Fox - Revered In Japan

Foxes might be considered a nuisance here, but in Japan they're practically megastars. Known as kitsune, Japanese folklore depicts foxes as intelligent creatures with magical powers, and they've appeared in games by some of Japan's most esteemed developers. The most notable examples where foxes appear in games include the *Star Fox* series and *Sonic 2*, where one played Sonic's squeaky-voiced sidekick, Tails. Speaking of Tails, some legends also say that the more tails a fox has the more powerful they are – Tails can therefore be seen as the Harry Potter of videogame foxes.

HOW IT PLAYS



Physics Fox

Psycho Fox isn't the easiest game at first. Movement feels a little overzealous because it uses inertia-based physics. This means jumping from a stop is pointless, and it takes time for Fox to build up acceleration for his run. More frustrating, he can only take one hit before snuffing it, and you're dropped back to the start of the level. However, with perseverance and some sacrificial hair, you get used to his skittishness, and learning when to use his animal forms helps to soften the difficulty. In the end, *Psycho Fox* does a competent job of meshing together the pace of *Sonic* with the exploration of *Mario*.

A FOX TALE



The Story Explained

Like most platform games, *Psycho Fox*'s story is bananas. It tells the tale of a bad fox deity named Madfox Daimyojin, who sets about using his magical powers to conquer the land and populate it with an army of unpleasant creatures. Apparently the best way to thwart a mad fox is to simply send in a psychotic one, and so the people of the land call upon Psycho Fox to lend a hand. Using his decidedly un-psychotic metamorphosis powers, Psycho Fox embarks on a mission to thwart Madfox, restore peace and get crowned king. Something like that anyway… the king part we just assumed was a given.

RANDOM MINI-GAME



Walk The Line(s)

Pick up some cash bags during the game and between stages you can partake in a random-win mini-game. Requiring zero skill to play, you're presented with a choice of trails on which to plonk Psycho Fox (or Psycho Foxes, depending on how many bags you've collected). Obscured from view, each of the trails' ending leads to either something good – extra lives or a nice transmute stick – or something rubbish like a hole to fall down. With your trails chosen, you then get to watch as your Psycho Foxes walk up the path on autopilot, occasionally changing direction at the points where they connect.

A SORT-OF SERIES



A Spiritual Guide

Psycho Fox is part of a family of platform games that includes *Kid Kool* and *Magical Flying Hat Turbo Adventure*. What connects these three games is that they all feature heroes that move with momentum and use a boomerang-like projectile weapon. Tec Toy also released its own take on *Psycho Fox* for the SMS. Titled *Sapo Xulé: Os Invasores Do Brejo*, it's identical bar some graphical changes: it changes Fox into a toad (said to have been based on a popular toy in Brazil) and replaces the original animal forms with a pig, a turtle and a mouse. Some of the bosses were also altered too. We call it 'Mental Toad'.



IN THE KNOW

- **PLATFORM:** SMS
- **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- **DEVELOPER:** VIC TOKAI
- **RELEASED:** 1989
- **GENRE:** PLATFORMER

What the press said… ages ago



Mean Machines, 90%

For a Sega game, the graphics are pretty good, with well-animated sprites and varied backdrops. But it's the gameplay and lastability that count.

ACE

Psycho Fox is very much a game for platform game aficionados. It is *Mario*-esque and features some very tough pieces of platforming. It has real lasting value.

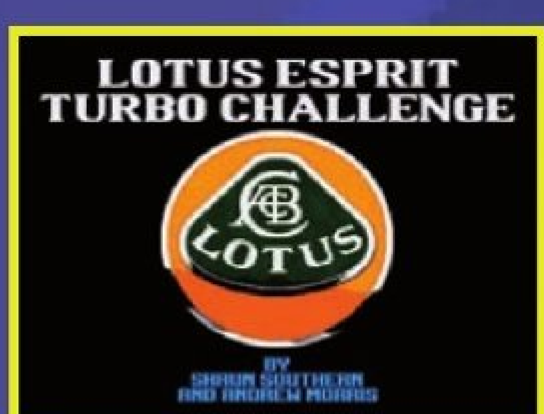
What we think

We agree. The graphics look and animate brilliantly for a SMS game. But its appeal isn't just skin deep; there's a lot of tough game to work through too. For us, it's the best game in Vic Tokai's bizarre platforming trilogy.

THE LOTUS SERIES

Hello and welcome to Really Great Retro Racing Games! Today, Craig Grannell is joined in the commentary box by Shaun Southern and Andrew Morris, to talk about their hit Lotus series on the Amiga. Now, where's that chequered flag gone?





IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** GREMLIN GRAPHICS
- » **DEVELOPER:** MAGNETIC FIELDS
- » **RELEASED:** 1990-94
- » **PLATFORMS:** AMIGA
- » **GENRE:** RACING

Most racing games quickly tumble into obsolescence. What once dazzled looks tired when technology evolves, leaving shallow gameplay in its wake. Occasionally, though, a racing game is a videogaming milestone, transcending the ages and appealing to gamers today as much as it did when originally released.

For Amiga gamers, the *Lotus* series falls into this category. Developed by Magnetic Fields, a partnership between Shaun Southern and Andrew Morris, the first game represented a fundamental shift in the developers' approach to videogame design.

"It's always exciting designing games for new technology, looking for the best way to exploit new hardware," says Andrew. "It was clear in 1990 that the Amiga was the way forward, and so once 8-bit sales started to dry up, we made the move." After testing the water with top-down racer *Super Cars*, the pair considered their next game. A shoot-'em-up idea went nowhere, so Andrew pushed for another racing title, integrating the split-screen gameplay that had been successful in Shaun's C64 version of *Trailblazer*.

LOTUS ESPRIT TURBO CHALLENGE

Andrew recalls how Shaun rapidly got a road routine working that used mathematical algorithms and raster manipulation, and Porsches were dropped in to race against.

"The game worked on one frame, so it was very fast and smooth," says Shaun. Armed with an early demo, complete with turns, hills and lap-based courses, the pair approached Gremlin, which had published *Super Cars*. Andrew remembers that Gremlin "immediately loved the game", saying that it had acquired the Lotus licence and thought the





» [Amiga] Rivals in *Lotus* were all white due to memory limitations, but this enabled them to stand out from the players' cars.



» [Amiga] The split-screen was left in the single-player game to emphasise *Lotus*'s two-player nature and to ensure that the game ran at 60fps.

"It created a feeling of a fast fairground ride, a dimension we'd not seen in any other game"

ANDREW MORRIS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF TRACK UNDULATION

Magnetic Fields game was a perfect fit – if the Porsches were dropped in favour of Lotuses, obviously.

Ultimately, the *Lotus* road routine was key; everything in the game flowed from it. This aspect of *Lotus* was specifically built around the Amiga's capabilities, enabling Shaun to program a very fast game: "We used the blitter chip to draw everything – this was necessary so we could have hills. Without them, we could have used the Amiga's scrolling to slide the track around and then overlay sprite objects, but our objects were bigger than sprites could handle. Hills meant we had to move the track up and down as well, so we needed a new approach."

Shaun elaborates on roughly how the track and rendering worked: "Each segment of the course had a change left/right amount and a change up/down direction amount – this was the track data. So since the camera followed the course, as you 'projected' down the track and added up the changes in directions, each unit of track had a resultant direction left and right and up and down. For each of those sections, we worked out an offset left/right on screen and an offset up/down from the 'norm', which would be a flat, straight track into the distance. For each of these sections, we interpolated each line that was visible, such that we only had to draw one horizontal line of track for each line. We pre-built this track data for every possible size and used the blitter to put everything on screen as fast as possible."

A "very tight bit of code" worked out the track bit by bit as it sent data to the blitter to draw, and Shaun says by the time they'd worked out the next line, the blitter had finished drawing the previous one, so it was efficient. He adds: "We then created cars and roadside objects as flat sprites at different sizes and used the blitter to put them on screen. Stored clipping information cut off the bottoms of items behind hills."

Andrew says Shaun's approach is what enabled so many cars to be simultaneously on the screen and reckons any alternative would have been too slow: "Many games, particularly arcade conversions, tried to do too much for the hardware to handle. Those games ended up being so slow that they were unplayable."

ARCADE RACING

With the road working and populated, attention switched to gameplay considerations: courses, AI and fine-tuning handling. Throughout, Shaun and Andrew decided that *Lotus* would be an arcade racer: it wouldn't eschew realism, but fun would always take priority. Tracks were rapidly worked up based on lists of numbers that told the road where to go. "There was no physical design," explains Andrew. "The design as such was limited to the number and severity of bends and hills, dictated by what level you were on." He says during the more severe levels the importance of the track undulation became clear: "It created a feeling of a fast fairground ride, an important dimension we'd not seen in any other game."

Lotus wasn't only about speed, though. Borrowing from C64 racer *Pitstop II*, tension was added with limited fuel and enforced pitstops. "The idea was to make you think a bit, and to ensure that the game didn't become monotonous, only being about who can miss the most cars," reflects Shaun. "You had to think about how much fuel you'd need to finish a race, and how fast to drive, because when racing at higher speeds you used more fuel."

Most of your time was spent on the track, though. In single-player mode, you had a pack of computer cars to contend with; in two-player mode, you had the added distraction of battling a friend. Historically, *Lotus* has been accused of having somewhat forceful computer-controlled cars, but Shaun admits that the AI is one of "so many things that were fudged but that no one really noticed". He reveals that the cars just move from left to right at a given speed, even, unrealistically, when going round corners. Each also moves forward at a set speed until reaching the car in front, whereupon they swap speeds. "This has the effect of a car that's been



The Making Of ... THE LOTUS SERIES



CONVERSION CAPERS

WITH HIS EARLIEST games, Shaun tended to deal with Commodore conversions himself, but *Lotus* spelled the end of that line of thinking. When it came to *Lotus* making the move to other systems, he recalls: "We told the people doing the conversions how things worked, gave them the code and tracks – although I've no idea how faithfully they copied them – and that was that."

Given that the game was so highly tailored to run on the Amiga, Shaun says he was amazed that the game worked at all on other platforms, and especially those that were comparatively underpowered: "It was a tough game to play when it updated at seven or eight frames per second, but I remember people being happy with it."

Andrew concurs: "We didn't have any real input and wondered how anyone would convert the game, but, in fairness, they did a reasonable job. The game ran slowly but looked quite good."

racing away from you suddenly slowing down, bringing you close to it quickly, but it does the opposite for cars behind you that are trying to overtake," says Shaun, admitting that he programmed things this way so that he "wouldn't have to worry about opposing cars trying to overtake each other. No one noticed and it added to the gameplay – lucky, really!" This mechanism also meant that while the rival cars might all frustratingly zoom past when you were refuelling, you'd get the chance to catch them up again. "Once we got that aspect of the game right, the difficulty level was set by a 'base' speed per race – and a lot of testing," adds Shaun.

Collisions and handling were also made simple to keep racing competitive throughout the game. "If crashes damaged you so you were behind and also slower, you'd have no chance, so we never considered that route – *Lotus* was an arcade game, not a simulator," says Shaun. "And because of this, we decided on simple 'twitchy' controls that made you want to play again, because when you failed you thought it was your fault." Andrew adds that the straightforward nature of the handling was also somewhat dictated by the limitations of the road routine: "The thought of including realistic physics in the game was never really an option. Instead, we created a game that relied on fast reactions and easing off the power in corners to keep the car on the road. I think we worked out the car did 0-60 in about two seconds and had a top speed of over 200mph – much faster than the real thing!"

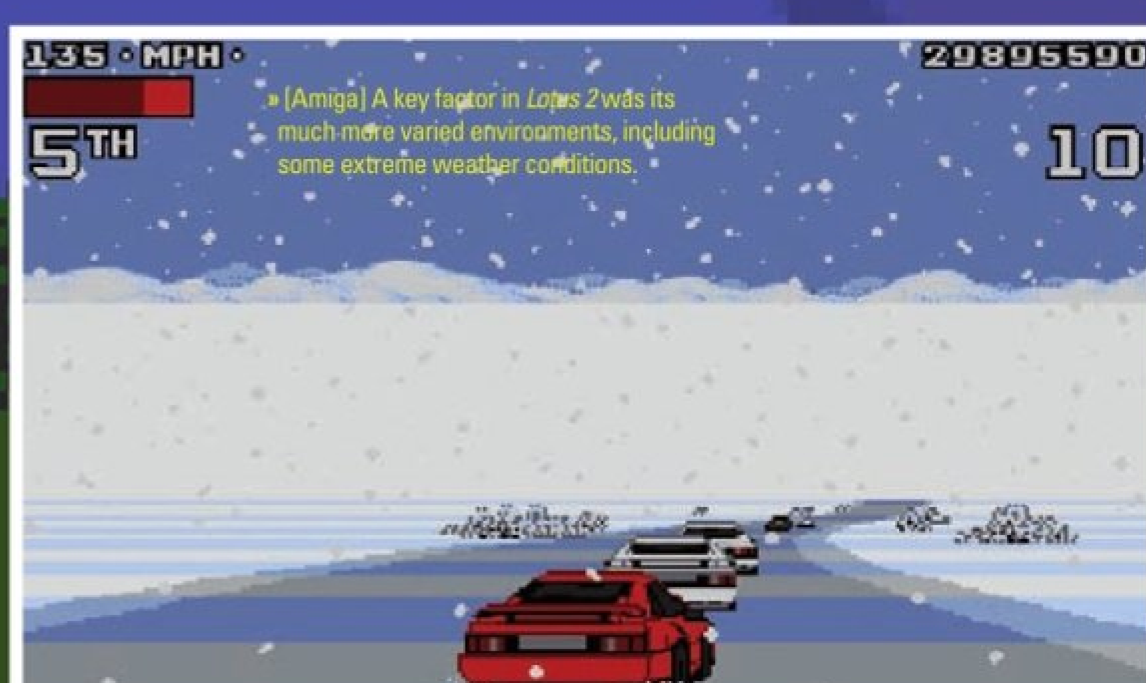
On completion, Shaun recalls playing the game through until he'd beaten it and was awarded the 'Lotus licence', which he says was "a pretty good sign". And shortly thereafter, the press heaped praise on the title: "A brilliant game, and one that demands immediate purchase," enthused *CVG*, while *Amiga Format* called it "the best racing game yet". Shaun puts praise at the time and the game's subsequent longevity down to its "simplicity and addictiveness", saying it was "easy to pick up and play, but hard to master". Andrew agrees: "It didn't try to do too much and had the right balance between speed, playability and graphics. Because of that, it will always be one of the best examples of its type on the Amiga."

LOTUS TURBO CHALLENGE 2

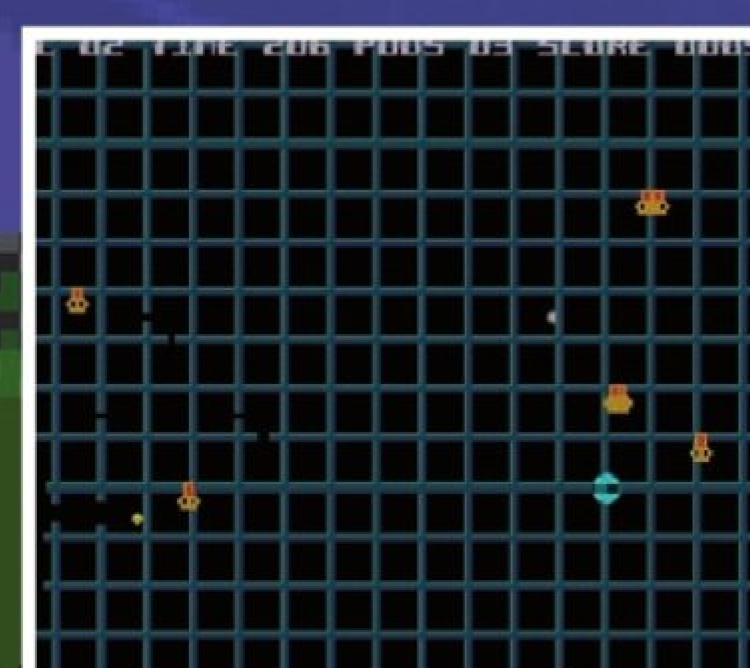
With a confirmed hit on its hands, Gremlin tasked Magnetic Fields with creating a sequel, although the game's direction was immediately very different from its predecessor's. "We didn't want to do a rehash, and so a checkpoint racer seemed the way to go," says Andrew.

"I like to think we took the braver choice – and it worked," adds Shaun, who considers *Lotus 2* the pair's finest hour.

Drawing on a wide range of influences – Andrew enjoyed *OutRun*; Shaun remembers *Rad Mobile*'s weather and terrain providing ideas – more emphasis was placed on varied environments and the single-player game. "Creating the game was a very different challenge to the original *Lotus*," says Shaun. "We had the road routine but had to add code to handle lots of new objects and vehicles, and we worked hard



» [Amiga] A key factor in *Lotus 2* was its much more varied environments, including some extreme weather conditions.





DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

TRAILBLAZER (PICTURED)
SYSTEMS: AMSTRAD, ATARI 8-BIT, ATARI ST, C16 AND PLUS/4, C64, GIZMONDO, MSX, SPECTRUM
YEAR: 1986

KIKSTART II
SYSTEM: AMIGA, AMSTRAD CPC, ATARI 8-BIT, C64, SPECTRUM
YEAR: 1987

SUPERCARS
SYSTEM: AMIGA, AMSTRAD CPC, ATARI ST, COMMODORE 64, NES, ZX SPECTRUM
YEAR: 1990





» [Amiga] As you belt along the motorway in *Lotus 2*, you face oncoming traffic and can drive under articulated lorries.

on making each of the levels unique and in getting the stage times right." Andrew notes that on the hardest levels "you often ran out of time and 'rolled' over the finish line, which usually had people cheering".

At every stage during development, decisions were driven by a desire to increase variety. "Technically, the course design happened in a similar way to the original game, but this time we were really pushing the abilities of the Amiga, creating features that hadn't been seen before," says Andrew. He recalls the "look of amazement on people's faces" when they saw levels with fog, although Shaun jokes that he'd "never seen a more dismal scene in an arcade racer than in our storm level". There was also a determination to push the arcade nature of the game, hence, as Andrew says, "adding obstacles to each course that made it surprising and interesting". Instead of avoiding huge lorries, it was decided that the player should drive under them. In the forest level, you'd be launched into the air after hitting logs, which Shaun says was influenced by *Kikstart*. And oncoming cars were added – at the time a rarity in arcade racers, which typically had suspiciously one-way traffic. "That was a feature we really enjoyed creating," says Andrew. "Mind you, with your car belting along at 200mph, we slowed oncoming traffic to 30, otherwise it would have been impossible to avoid!"

The *OutRun*-style checkpoint system also forced other decisions. Pitstops were dropped because they slowed the game down, and while limited fuel was considered, checkpoints were deemed enough to drive players on. The lack of lap-based tracks meant the game could be lonely when you were leading.

"We had the same algorithm to make rival cars catch you up, but, yes, if you were out in front, you weren't going to 'lap' anyone – we kept things realistic in that respect," says Shaun. Andrew adds that "there were other distractions anyway, which you didn't have in *Lotus*", arguing that leading drivers were kept occupied by environmental hazards and the 'edge of the seat' time factor: "Even if there wasn't a car in sight, you were always against the clock." Also, the game's one-player mode went full-screen, which Shaun says happened because the game "had more of a one-player feel about it and we felt we could sacrifice a little speed to get the obvious benefit of a full-screen mode". He adds that the first *Lotus* game established the two-player credentials of the series, so there was no longer a need to emphasise them.



DISTANT COUSINS

Lotus-like games through the ages



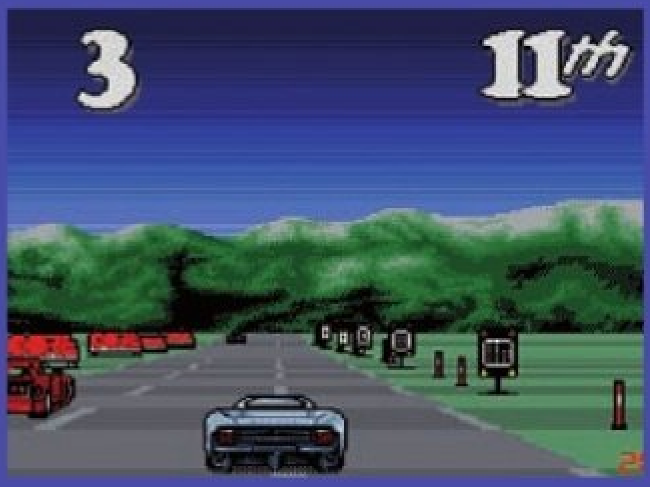
Pitstop II (C64, 1984)
The much-loved C64 racer by Epyx is almost a proto-*Lotus* with its split-screen gameplay and pitstop scene.

"Fairly obviously, yes, we were essentially making *Pitstop II* for the Amiga, although, of course, trying to improve on it," admits Shaun. "Although we didn't associate with F1, aside from fake driver names!"



Top Gear (SNES, 1992)
A split-screen racer with remixed *Lotus* music, released by Gremlin Graphics… Hang on a minute!

"Yes, and it caused fuss in the office at the time," grumbles Andrew. "But there was little we could do. Many reviews mentioned the similarity and I think it would be fair to say that it was… uh… 'heavily influenced' by *Lotus*."



Jaguar XJ220 (Amiga, 1992)
Core's pretty racer somewhat pre-empted *Lotus III*, boasting a course designer and varied environments, but it has a tendency to feel a bit empty and is a tad lacking in the 'fun' department. Still, if you like 'smooth' and 'attractive', it might be your bag of sprite-based racer.



Lamborghini: American Challenge (SNES/Amiga, 1993)
Resembling *Lotus*, twice removed – or *Pitstop II*, thrice removed, we suppose – this effort from Titus is effectively *Crazy Cars III* with some natty new threads and optional split-screen gubbins. It was also a wee bit sluggish on a stock Amiga, unlike the original *Lotus*.

> **“Our aim was to give it wide appeal, make everyone happy and pull out all the stops”**
>
> ANDREW MORRIS ON THE APPROACH TO LOTUS III

» [Amiga] The RECS course designer in *Lotus III* enables you to create new tracks in seconds.



Perhaps ironically, then, the two-player mode suffered a little from changes to core mechanics. While the original game let both players continue if one met the required conditions, *Lotus 2* wasn't so forgiving: if a player didn't reach a checkpoint, their game ended, regardless of how their rival fared. “It didn't seem right to bring both through – this was a game against the clock more than the other player,” considers Shaun.

However, something that certainly was forgiving was the game's collisions, which seemed designed to bounce you back to the road, even on colliding with a roadside object at top speed. Shaun scuppers suggestions that this was down to demands from Lotus, arguing that it was all about gameplay: “It was to speed things up. A single crash could put you out of the race, and since it was time, not your position, that could end your game, that was much more critical.” Andrew adds: “It stopped the game becoming frustrating. It's more fun to have a fast pace and a tighter time limit than to have to allow for obstacles that actually just annoy.”

Like the original *Lotus*, the sequel was a hit. Shaun repeats that he considers it his best game, and despite noting that there were a few ‘if it ain't broke, why fix it?’ complaints, “there were many more plaudits for doing something new”.

LOTUS III: THE ULTIMATE CHALLENGE

The final game in the series, *Lotus III: The Ultimate Challenge*, was started immediately after its predecessor's completion. But it was more evolution than revolution, refining *Lotus 2* and reviving aspects of the first game that people missed. “Our aim was to give it long-lasting appeal, make everyone happy and pull out all the stops, because we were pretty sure there wouldn't be another *Lotus* game,” explains Andrew.

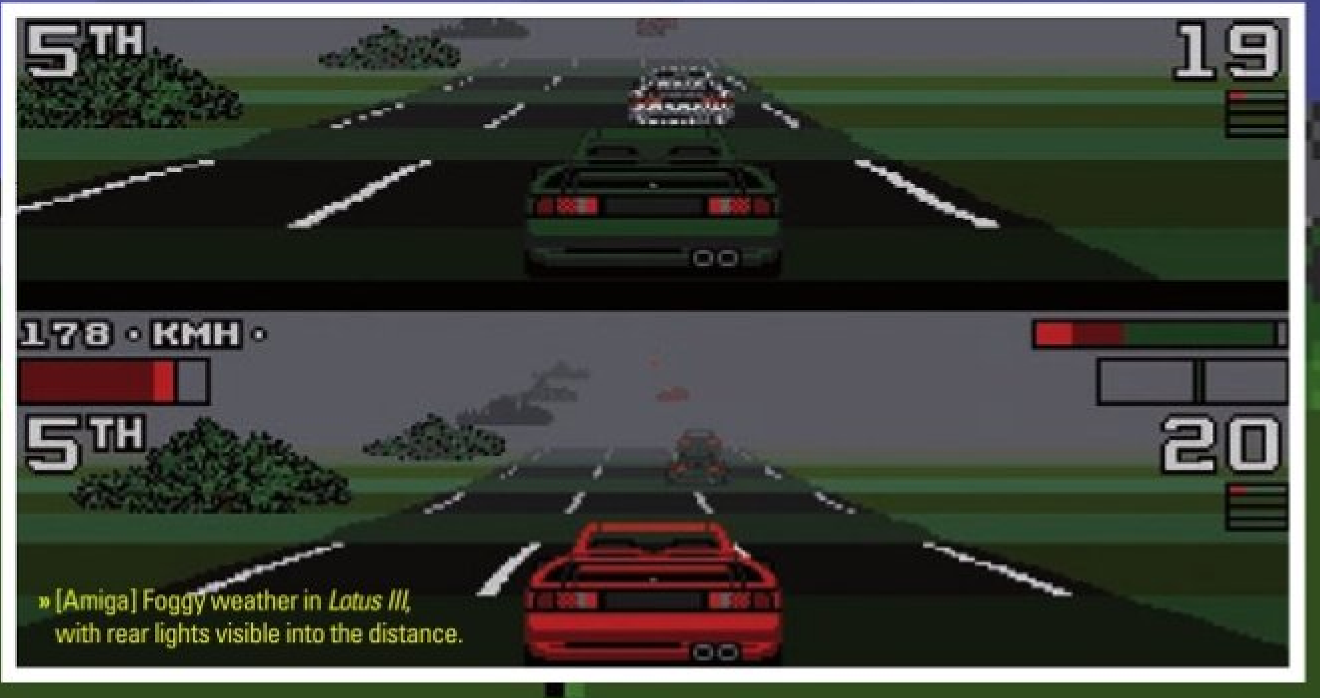
Thus, *Lotus III* provided you with both head-to-head racing and arcade-oriented time trials. Some graphics were notably recycled, although the game also included new environments. “The thing is, the game was huge and a lot of work, and we always wanted to include more, hence us reusing graphics in order to not limit the size of the game,” says Andrew.

Of the new environments, the *RoadBlasters*-style Futuristic, with trackside lasers and chequerboard road, was the biggest diversion from earlier games. Shaun thinks “the design was a bit odd and borrowed from other games”, but Andrew reckons that it was a worthy addition: “The Futuristic level looked great and felt different to anything else in the series. If anything, I'd also say it was more a nod to *Trailblazer* than *RoadBlasters*.” He adds that there was also a lot of diversity elsewhere in the game: “The Windy level added a new dynamic and Mountainside looked visually distinct.”

However, *Lotus III*'s most important addition was the Racing Environment Construction Set (RECS). “We'd worked with course designers before, and with *Lotus III* likely to be the final game in the series, we thought gamers would be able to complete the game and gain further enjoyment from creating their own tracks,” explains Andrew. The pair started out with the concept of a slot-based editor but weren't convinced. “It struck me as a slow, boring way of designing a course that wasn't in the spirit of the *Lotus* series, and I doubted anyone



» [Amiga] It might be a videogame, but there's still no escaping from roadworks in *Lotus III*.



» [Amiga] Foggy weather in *Lotus III*, with rear lights visible into the distance.

would find it interesting enough to use," continues Andrew.

"We'd also never had our own course editor, otherwise we'd have maybe reworked that for the game's editor, but it still would have been a lot of work for anyone to create a track," says Shaun. "That's when Andrew came up with the code-based method."

With *Lotus* courses being lists of numbers, Andrew realised that the game could enable players to 'describe' courses by manipulating variables: "I spoke to Shaun about using sliders to adjust obstacles and corners, and he worked out how to program it. We then added a 'track code' output system." Initially, the pair considered having a traditional editor alongside the radical, quickfire RECS, but those plans were quickly shelved. "What decided it for us was the ease with which you could send a track to someone," says Shaun.

Although plenty of effort went into the game's visuals and track editor, *Lotus III* hit the market to a mixed reaction. *Amiga Power* criticised its lack of speed and smoothness, saying when you put your foot down "it felt more like the engine of a Skoda", and even *Amiga Action*'s positive review said that "*Lotus 2* owners won't find their money's worth". Shaun thinks those reactions were fair: "It was slower [than competing games], even on simpler courses, because our racing engine suddenly had lots of additional code to handle the extra effects, track types and racing modes."

Andrew's not so sure, however: "Whatever reviewers said was often meaningless and based on a few hours' play, so it was tough to take them seriously. For example, one said we'd copied another game's music selector, despite that game ripping off the one from *Lotus*." He suggests the team did the best it could at the time, although in hindsight "[we] should have added something a little more like *Super Cars* – or, later, *Gran Turismo* – where you would earn money in order to progress".

Lotus III was indeed the final game in the series, although it quietly nipped back in 1994 with *Lotus Trilogy* for the Amiga CD32, which neither Shaun nor Andrew remembers a great deal about.

Shaun is unsure why the series ended, but Andrew thinks the pair had "done as much as we could with Amiga racing games", noting that the next Magnetic Fields release, *Kid Chaos*, took two years and dovetailed with the end of the Amiga's commercial life.

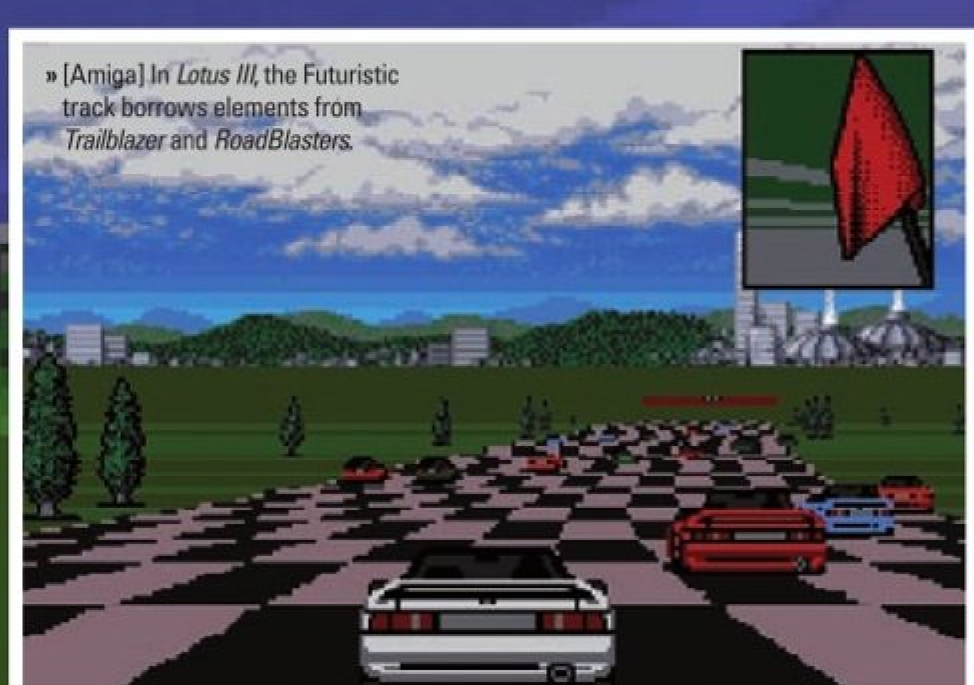
Looking back, the pair remain proud of their *Lotus* racers. "They're some of the best-remembered titles on the Amiga, they put Gremlin on the map, and they established Shaun and I as a design team that knew what it was doing with racing games, leading to us getting the licence to do the *Rally Championship* games," enthuses Andrew, adding that each *Lotus* release had its own merits: "The first was original, the second was exciting and the bestseller, and the third was the most comprehensive – and my favourite." And Shaun, rarely one to revisit his past games, admits that he might make an exception: "I might have to go and find that Amiga emulation disk now… **Retro Gamer**'s made me go all sentimental."



EMULATION NATION

IF YOU'RE SOMEONE who lovingly strokes your iThing and welds classic games to it, you'll be happy to know that an Amiga emulator is winging its way to the App Store. And if you're a fan of *Lotus*, you'll be positively thrilled to know that the *Lotus* games will be available. "It's taking quite a long time, considering I saw a version of it running ages ago, but Manomio's trying to perfect things," says Shaun. "But it looked good and I'm looking forward to it coming out." He thinks the transition to iOS should be more successful than with his C64 games, which were "too fiddly".

Andrew, too, is excited at the prospect of a *Lotus* comeback: "It makes me very happy, because it's great to see classic games getting a new lease of life and being enjoyed by our generation for nostalgic reasons but also by a new generation that appreciates them for their retro appeal and playability."



» [Amiga] In *Lotus III*, the Futuristic track borrows elements from *Trailblazer* and *RoadBlasters*.



» [Amiga] The *Lotus III* options screen sums up how the game effectively combined its two predecessors.

THE UNCONVERTED

Arcade games that never made it home



IN DEPTH

» These red platforms are used to access new areas. Be wary, though, as they quickly disappear once you've stepped on them.

» You only have a set amount of time to complete each stage. The quicker your time, the better the bonus you receive.

» There are different enemies found on each level. Work out their attack pattern to best avoid them.



MAGICAL CRYSTALS

■ **Developer:** Kaneko ■ **Year:** 1991 ■ **Genre:** Puzzle

■ **One of the greatest joys of writing The Unconverted is that you never know what you might unearth. *Magical Crystals* is one such gem – pun certainly intended – cleverly mixing the puzzle and shoot-'em-up genres with a healthy amount of cuteness to great effect.**

Taking on the role of a wizard, your quest is to move around the levels and recover a specific number of crystals. Once each crystal and its trapped fairy are free, you can seek out the exit and proceed to the next stage. The task is made more difficult by the fact that some areas aren't activated until you've collected certain crystals and that a large number of enemies stand in your way.

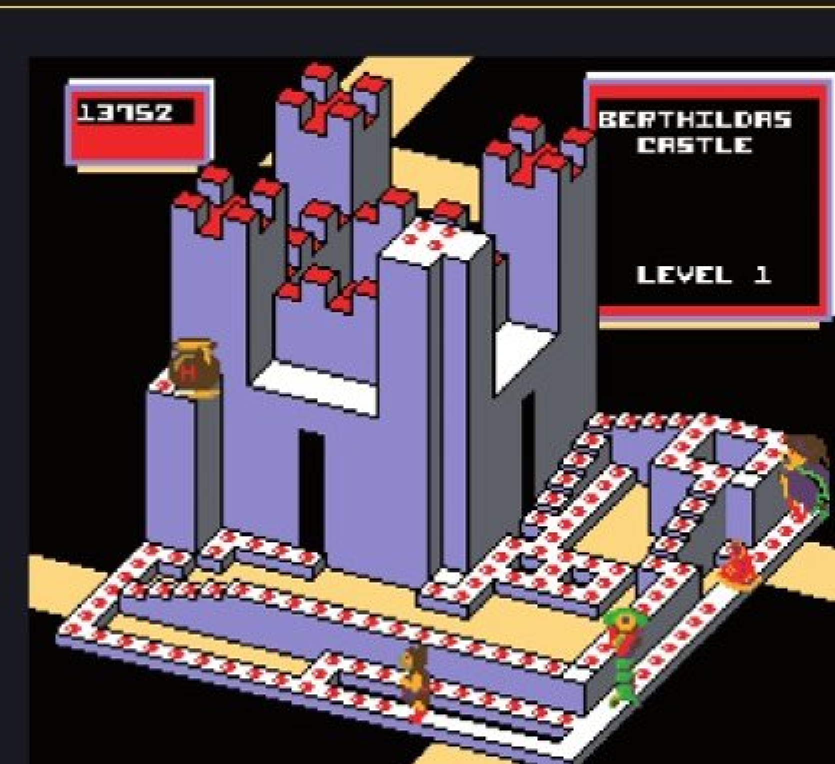
This is where the shoot-'em-up element of *Magical Crystals* comes in, as the screen can get quite busy with enemy bullets; more so when you finally get a chance to tackle the massive, cute bosses that await you at the end of each world. Bullets can be jumped over, but your best bet is to shoot first and hope that no one's left so you have to ask questions later.

As you progress further into the game, the layouts for each stage start to become increasingly more complex, requiring a fair amount of lateral thinking in order to work out the quickest way to harvest the crystal and reach the exit. It's a clever blend of playing styles that works beautifully thanks to some tight controls, intelligent design and a neat range of fun power-ups.

The gameplay is further enhanced by the many mini-games that can be found at the end of each stage. Charming fillers designed to allow you to let off steam before the next stage, they enable you to take part in everything from tug-of-war to a simple shooting gallery, but add immeasurably to *Magical Crystals*' overall charm.

And charm is one thing that Kaneko's game has by the bucketful. While the level environments are fairly generic and not particularly creative – a slippery ice world here, a flaming lava world there – the enemies themselves are an utterly bizarre bunch, having a range of different attack patterns that constantly keep you on your toes.

It's not an easy game, with hard as nails gameplay hiding under its cheery exterior, but if you're looking for something that's a little different from the norm, we wholeheartedly suggest that you check out *Magical Crystals* as soon as possible. You won't be disappointed.



CONVERTED ALTERNATIVE

CRYSTAL CASTLES 1983

Okay, so it's a bit of a tenuous link, but it is a platformer of sorts, and you do get to collect crystals as well. Released on a variety of home systems back in the day, we actually really like the Game Room version.

ANGEL KIDS

■ **Developer:** Sega ■ **Year:** 1988 ■ **Genre:** Platform



» [Arcade] *Angel Kids*' controls are tough to adapt without twin sticks, contributing to the lack of home ports.

■ **This is rather** refreshing: a twin-stick arcade game that doesn't involve shooting hordes of enemies. Rather than follow the likes of *Robotron*, Sega used the unique control method to control two angels in a game that has a lot in common with the likes of *Doodle Jump* on the iPhone.

The two angels share a rope, which they use to bounce a small child as high as possible. Along the way pick-ups in the form of balloons are available, and the angle of the girl's jumps can be adjusted by changing the tautness of the rope. It's a rather clever idea that's slightly let down by the initial difficulty of controlling the two angels, thanks to the system being a little cumbersome and the random physics of your charge, who can seemingly spin out of control through no fault of your own. Practice makes perfect, however, and collecting the balloons that are scattered throughout each stage soon becomes rather addictive.

We're guessing that the control method would have put off developers from trying to convert it to home systems, which is a shame, as *Angel Kids* turns out to be an incredibly charming game once you get past that initial learning curve to the controls.

CONVERTED ALTERNATIVE

LIBBLE RABBLE 1983

While *Libble Rabble* plays completely differently to *Angel Kids*, it's another example of using the traditional dual-stick method in a new and inventive way. Namco's 1983 arcade game was also ported to a few systems, including Nintendo's SNES and the Sharp X68000.



CONVERTED ALTERNATIVE

FROGGER 1981

One of the most similar games to *Zzyzzyxx* is the awesome *Frogger* from Konami. It features similar gameplay mechanics and also has a lady friend who you need to impress. It's been released on an insane number of different systems over the years.



ZZYZZYXX

■ **Developer:** AMS ■ **Year:** 1982 ■ **Genre:** Maze



» [Arcade] *Zzyzyxx*'s most devious conundrum is the effect it has on our spellcheck.

■ **Now here's an** oddity. *Zzyzzyxx* has you controlling the titular annoyingly spelt hero through continually moving rows of bricks in a desperate effort to reach his girlfriend, who is located at the top of each screen.

Each row of bricks features the occasional gap, which Zzyzzyxx can use to slowly make his way up the screen. Care needs to be taken, however, as a number of vicious Rattifers are also found on each stage and will occupy empty blocks in an attempt to cut off Zzyzzyxx from his true love. Add in the fact that Zzyzzyxx's girlfriend has quite specific tastes – she will spurn your advances until you collect either a ring or flower – and *Zzyzzyxx* becomes quite a devious puzzler, as you constantly try to keep ahead of the Rattifers while seeking out those precious items.

It's not all bad news, though, because one of the weapons at your disposal is the ability to brick yourself in so that Rattifers are unable to catch you. This only lasts for a few seconds before you're thrown out into the next available space, but it's a great way of surviving on the later stages.

Zzyzzyxx may not be original, but it's a great deal of fun, which secures it a place in The Unconverted.

BEST LEFT IN THE ARCADE

BLACK HEART

■ **Developer:** NMK ■ **Year:** 1991 ■ **Genre:** Shoot-'em-up

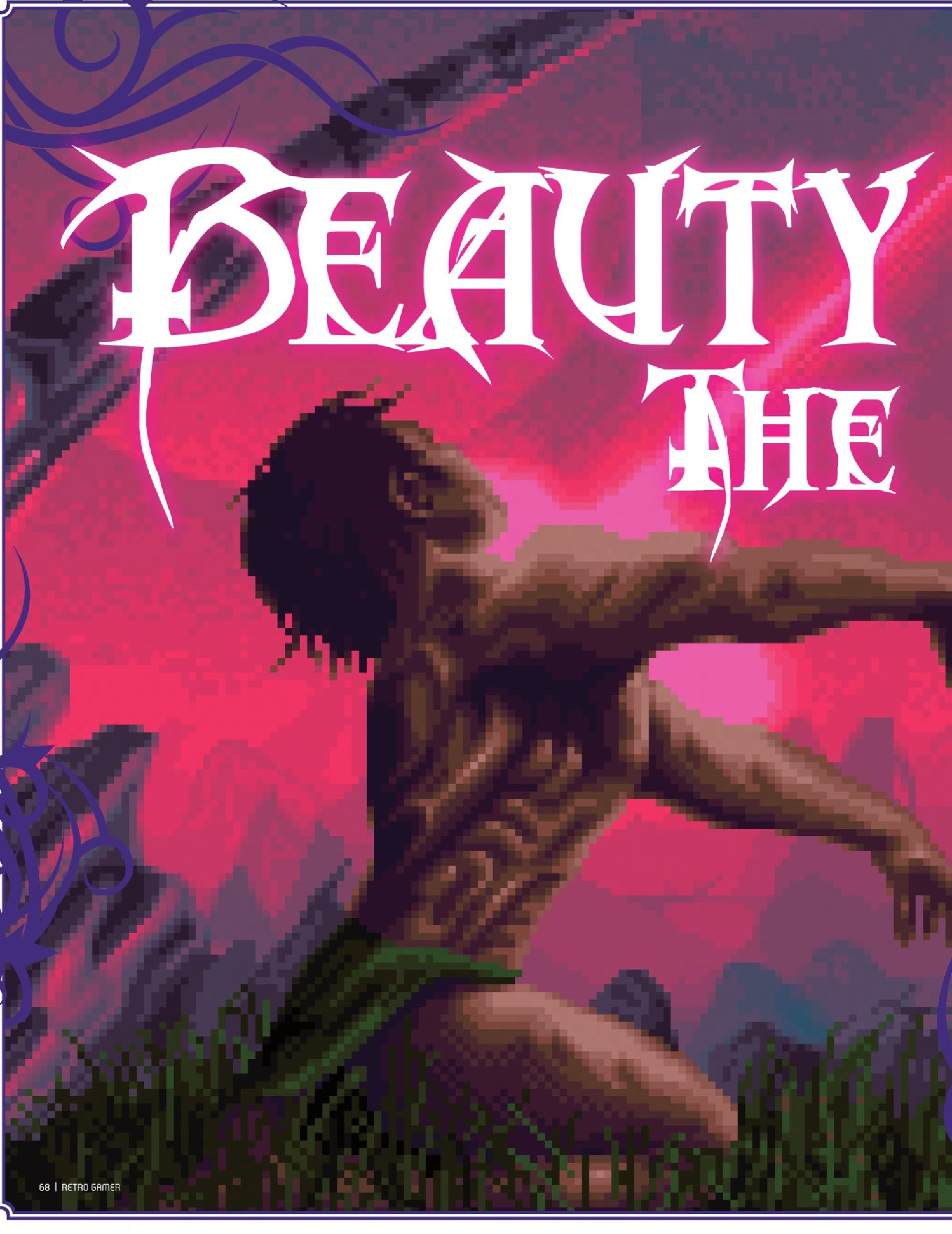
■ **Discovering *Black Heart*** was a bittersweet experience. Excitement climbed when we discovered that it was a shmup, only for said excitement to plummet into the dark depth of the abyss when we actually started playing it.

Everything about *Black Heart* feels wrong. The collision detection is annoying, the power-ups uninspiring, and the level design abysmal. Admittedly there are nice ideas thrown in – you won't be able to get past certain doors until you've destroyed the enemy holding the key, while other stages feature moving paths that must be traversed – but the execution is sloppy.

Power-ups are lacklustre, featuring fairy familiars and the ability to breath fire – you're a dragon, after all. We like how the dragon himself can soak up bullets and you only lose a life if his rider is hit, but even so, *Black Heart* is an utterly average and rather tedious shooter. Even the most devoted of genre fans aren't likely to get much enjoyment out of it.



BEAUTY
THE



OF BEASTS

The original Shadow Of The Beast is famous for many things: impressive visuals, great use of parallax scrolling, David Whittaker's fantastic score and being harder to finish than a glass of vinegar are just a few that we can think of. We can further list its lavish packaging and wallet-emptying price tag. Stuart Hunt speaks to Reflections' boss Martin Edmondson and discovers the story behind the studio's polarising Beast trilogy

Shadow Of The Beast

Having finished the Amiga game *Ballistix*, a budget *Crossfire*-style game for Psygnosis that shares the same fantasy aesthetics as the *Shadow* series, Reflections co-founder Martin Edmondson began reading Addison-Wesley's *Amiga Hardware Reference Manual* and, becoming interested in parallax scrolling techniques, found a cornerstone for the studio's next game.

"I did a technical sketch laying out the points and speeds at which different parallax layers should scroll and where to swap between the two playfields to produce a deep parallax effect," he recalls. "For its time the Amiga's co-processor (the 'copper') was an amazingly powerful bit of hardware that allowed you to precisely control all sorts of things at raster line level, including colour changes and hardware scrolling rates."

Martin was impressed by the power of the Amiga: "It made every other machine look steam-powered. It did things like twin playfield hardware scrolling in 60fps while playing high-quality stereo samples. Things that would have taken a room full of Atari STs to achieve." He saw the computer as the perfect platform to push the multiple parallax scrolling layers that he felt could be used to create the immersive fantasy world of *Shadow Of The Beast*.

A fantasy tale of revenge, *Shadow Of The Beast*'s story told the tragic tale of Aarbron, a goat-headed warrior who makes the grisly discovery that he was born a human boy and snatched away from his parents as an infant by his master, Maletoth, the Beast Lord. Transformed into a monster and groomed to be Maletoth's servant, all recollection of Aarbron's past is soon forgotten – that is until he witnesses

BEAUTY OF THE BEASTS





CAST NO SHADOW

THOSE WHO HAVE played *Shadow Of The Beast* may have noticed that its title screen doesn't actually display the game's full title and instead refers to the game simply as *Beast*. Intrigued as to whether or not there was a reason why this is – perhaps a late name change or technical limitations on the title screen – we put the question to Martin.

"I originally wanted to call the game simply *Beast*, but when Psygnosis did all of the usual legal checks there was a problem – an obscure arcade game, if I remember correctly – so we added '*Shadow Of The*', and Roger added a shadow to the right-hand side of the box artwork. That big purple *BEAST* logo on the scrolling screen stayed as I'd already drawn it and no one noticed or cared about that singular appearance of the original name."



» [Amiga] *Shadow Of The Beast* started out as a tech demo for the Amiga that "morphed into a game" as production moved along, according to Martin.

the sacrificial death of his parents and some suppressed memories are triggered. With the truth exposed, Aarbron is understandably left baying for his master's blood and sets off to exact vengeance.

"Artistically I was a big fan of artists such as Roger Dean and Rodney Matthews, and that drove the desire to create the fantasy world and look," Martin tells us "On a technical level, [*SOTB*] was heavily influenced by arcade games of the time in that I was adamant the game should run in 60fps, which was pretty much the norm in arcades. Basically it had to feel more like an arcade game than a home computer game."

Shadow Of The Beast's story stretched across all three games, with the player always assuming the role of Aarbron but his appearance altering slightly – gradually becoming more human. The individual stories, enemies and bosses of each episode were designed and developed as the production for the games went along, with the idea of Aarbron gradually regressing from creature back to human form the only aspect that was planned early on.

In addition to the game's striking parallax visuals, praise was lavished on its atmospheric and high-quality

"It had to feel more like an arcade game than a home computer game"

score by musician David Whittaker. One of the busiest and most in-demand videogame music composers working at the time, and having written music for a number of titles for Psygnosis in the past, David was brought in to work alongside Martin to compose the music for the game.

"He [David] was also good technically and we didn't have time to write a player and everything involved with that," says Martin. "I spoke to him early on and discussed the direction for the music in quite a bit of detail. The problem was at the time he used a recognisable and fixed bank of samples that were low-ish audio quality but extremely efficient on memory, and I wanted to do something completely different – high-end Fairlight-type sound – so there started a long negotiation with him and re-sampling every instrument specifically for *Beast*."

Released in 1989, *Shadow Of The Beast* became a popular title for the Amiga, with the middling review scores it received doing nothing to harm its runaway success. Many reviewers at the time felt that *Shadow Of The Beast* was little else but a great showcase of the graphical and audio capabilities of the Amiga, and while this assessment seems a little unfair if you consider the fact that the game was essentially trying to ape the feel of a side-scrolling action arcade game – though its story and visuals do hint at it being something a little more cerebral – it's a feeling that's not entirely unwarranted. And Martin agrees.







"I don't think that is fair for *Beast II* and *III* due to the number and complexity of the puzzles, but yes, that is probably fair comment about *Beast I*. It was started as a technological demo that sort of morphed into a game as we went along, so it was pretty simple in gameplay terms. Gameplay flexibility was severely limited by the graphics mode chosen. Monsters, for example, could only be moved over one of the two playfields – notice how they died, for example – so that was a deliberate style-over-substance decision.

Despite Martin's candour about why some reviewers may have felt the game lacked substance, many Amiga owners thought that *Shadow Of The Beast* was something special. It was seen as a wonderfully polished game to show off the true untapped power of the Amiga, something far removed from the raft of uninspired ST ports that so often found their way to the computer. *Beast* went some way to help cause a shift in Amiga gaming as far as visuals and imagination was concerned. The substance would come later.

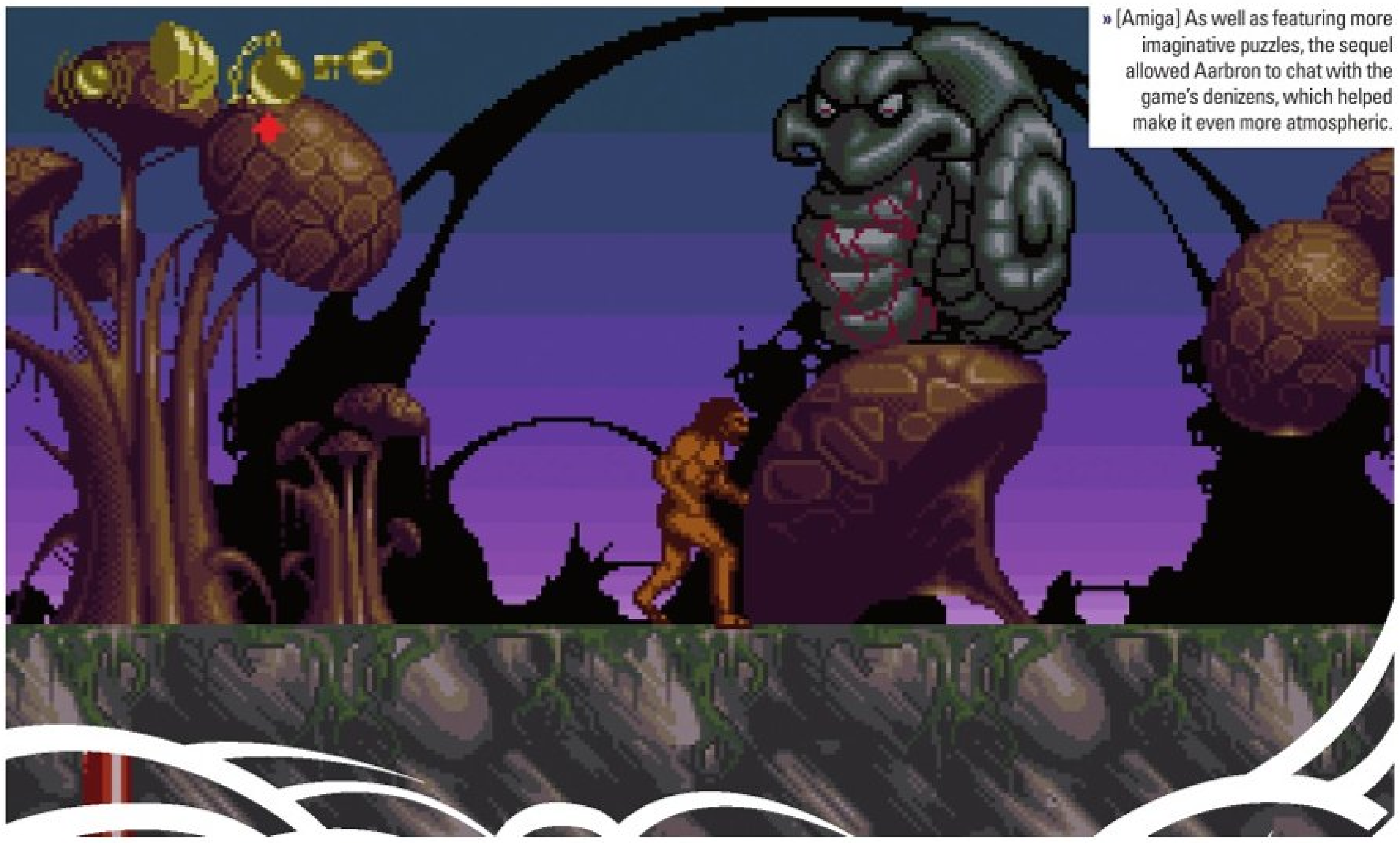
Shadow Of The Beast II

For the sequel, Reflections had a clear aim to improve and enhance on the original game, not really looking to implement any drastic or thematic changes but expand on its gameplay while addressing the criticisms of its simplistic design. Martin told us that the simple nature of *SOTB*'s gameplay can largely be attributed to the visual fidelity of the game: the team had effectively hit a ceiling and found themselves hamstrung when it came to design. If they wanted more variety in the sequel, they would have to rethink their approach.

"*Beast I*'s actual game design was severely restricted by the graphical modes chosen for that game – producing colourful scenes, many layers of scrolling, colourful monsters. We had pushed that about as far as we could, so for *Beast II* we designed a completely new scrolling system that, although less impressive graphically – fewer colours, less parallax – allowed the game to scroll in many directions, and, crucially, have sprites moving pretty freely anywhere we wanted in the scenery. This, of course, freed up the game design restrictions so we were able to design interesting puzzles into the game. Most of my inspiration for them came from films like *Indiana Jones* or from the many text adventures I had played when younger – Infocom stuff and one or two of Acornsoft's on the BBC Micro."

As well as a few layers of parallax, the sequel was missing the talents of David Whittaker. But while his score was an integral part of the original game, and even having worked so closely with David to produce the sound for the first game, not having him on board wasn't a massive concern for Martin.

"He was probably sick of me by the end of *Beast I*! I remember being so particular about it at



» [Amiga] As well as featuring more imaginative puzzles, the sequel allowed Aarbron to chat with the game's denizens, which helped make it even more atmospheric.

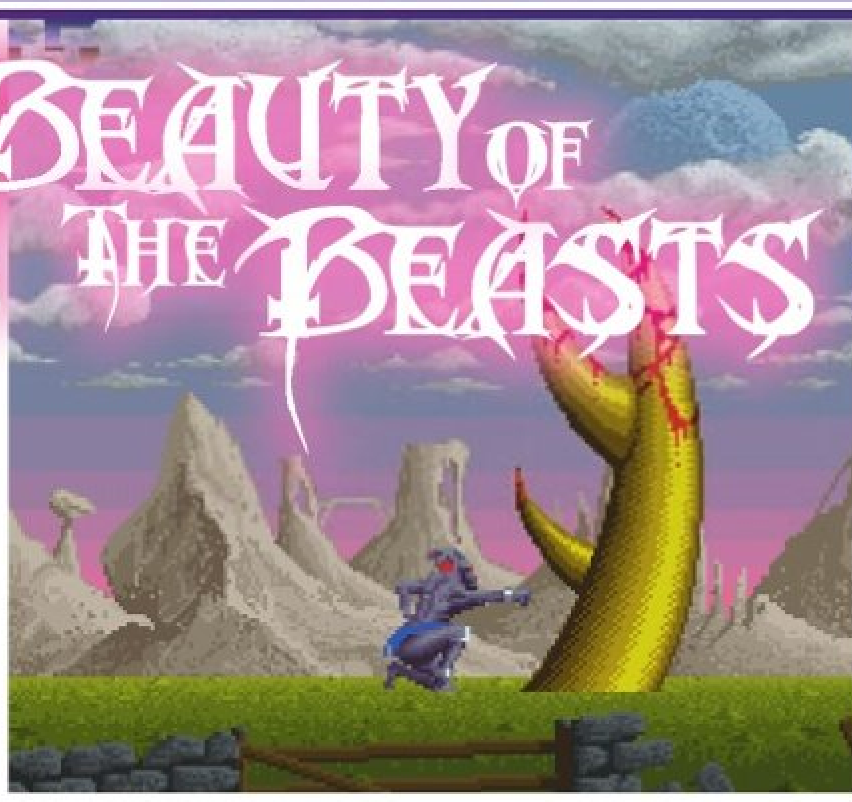


Caging The Beast

ALL THREE *Shadow Of The Beast* games were pretty pricey titles for their day. The first game especially retailed for a whopping £35, and this was in 1989. To help soften the financial blow, though, the game came with some pretty lavish packaging, which included a large box and a T-shirt featuring a print of the game's iconic box artwork by Roger Dean. So how did the idea for the sumptuous packaging and the collaboration with Roger come about? Martin explains.

"That was down to Ian Hetherington and Jonathan Ellis, the guys that ran Psygnosis at the time. I guess they saw the potential in the game to make a bit of a splash so backed it heavily. They were friends with Roger Dean, who was one of my favourite artists as it happened, and since he had painted previous game boxes for them such as *Brataccas* and *Obliterator*, the artist was an easy, if expensive, choice. The decision to go with that massive box and T-shirt to enhance the feeling of value followed. Must have been a nightmare for retailers..."

Beauty of the Beasts



“Beast’s design was restricted by the graphical modes chosen for it”



the time. I was practically specifying notes as well as instrument samples. I had a clear idea of what I wanted to do with the sequels: more of a melancholic electric guitar in the death sequence replacing *Beast I*’s pipes. Not that I was a musician or anything; everything was heavily inspired by other things such as films or CDs or whatever.”

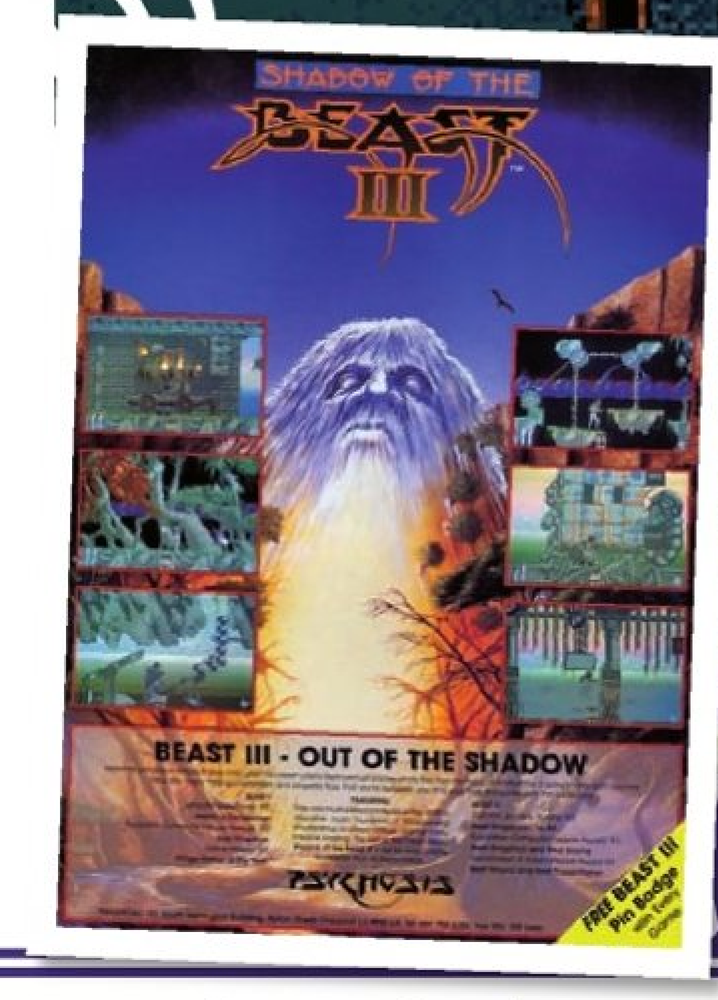
Fairly late on the project, though, musician Tim Wright was approached to work with Martin and write the score. At the time, Tim had been working for Psygnosis on a freelance basis, and, after finishing writing the music for *Puggs In Space*, saw his big break when the publisher asked him if he would like to score *Beast II*. Working directly with Martin, Tim was able to produce another excellent soundtrack for the series, which was just as well-received by fans.

Shadow Of The Beast II’s story picks up shortly after the first game. Aarbron is now partially returned to his human self, now looking like a primitive man, and the objective this time centres on the rescue of his baby sister from Maletoth, who is now looking for a new warrior messenger to take Aarbron’s place. The game was notably darker in tone than the first, kicking things off with a terrifyingly cinematic opening showing the abduction of Aarbron’s sister by a dark-winged dragon. Visually and sonically the game was gloomier in tone too, with muted palettes and the brightness levels cranked down. Tim’s deft use of electric guitar samples and synths on the soundtrack provided a bleak and moody ambience to the land of Karamoon, most noticeably in the game’s excellent death screen music, which actually helped soften the blow of dying in the game. Well, a little.

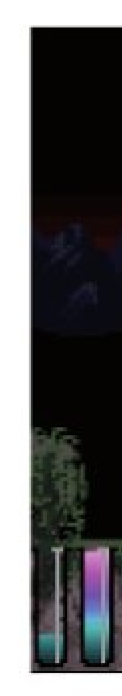
Indeed, while Reflections had focused on complementing *Beast*’s action with more complex puzzles, as well as other new features such as allowing Aarbron to converse with the various inhabitants of Karamoon, some felt all still wasn’t quite right with the gameplay – with the biggest issue once again being the game’s difficulty. While some welcomed the inclusion of more intricate puzzles, others felt they were too cryptic. The fact that some had to be cracked first go, and that it was possible to reach parts of the game without having first obtained the items needed to progress properly, was understandably also the cause of much molar-gnashing.

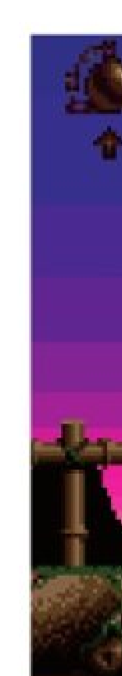
“All our games were difficult,” muses Martin when we asked him about his opinion on the game’s difficulty. “They were probably right. I do remember a lot of split-second timing and puzzles that would trap you if you made a wrong move – game design features that no one in their right mind would put up with now.”

Forgiving the fact that *Beast II* didn’t look as impressive – an unusual thing for a game sequel, even today – and was a lot tougher than the first game, press and fans considered the more involved gameplay









Conversions Of The Beast

Shadow Of The Beast was ported to a number of systems. Here are some of the conversions… and one that never saw release



Mega Drive

■ If you think the Amiga version was challenging, we dare you to try the Mega Drive port by Victor Technologies. Its notorious difficulty stems from the bizarre speed at which the game scrolls. With enemies running towards you as if you’re controlling Ringo Starr and the game is set at the height of Beatlemania, it makes hitting them extremely difficult. And given the fact that you only get one life, the gameplay boils down to a joyless memory test, with you remembering the enemy order and attack patterns to inch slowly through the game.

Lynx

■ The Lynx delivers a great port that loses none of the game’s famed parallax scrolling, crisp visuals or marvellous music, though the fact that this is one of the only ports on which Reflections assisted may have had something to do with its quality. Having said that, the game is again unmercifully challenging, and although being given three continues is certainly welcome, with no save function *Shadow Of The Beast* doesn’t really lend itself to portable gaming, being an often frustrating and lengthy game with no way to save your progress.





Commodore 64

■ DMA Design turned out a truly fantastic port of *Shadow Of The Beast* for the C64. In fact, so brilliant is it that we’d even go as far as to say that it is one of the best-looking games to appear on the system. The game rips by at a great pace and the big, beautiful enemy sprites are faithfully converted, as is the music and parallax scrolling. This is an impressive conversion, and it’s actually a little easier than the Amiga original too. Little wonder, then, that it was awarded 86% in *Zzap!64*.

Super Nintendo

■ In a disappointing twist, the one conversion of *Shadow Of The Beast* that actually went about remedying many of the difficulty issues of the original game was never released. Thankfully, some brilliant person went to the trouble of dumping the game ROM on the internet so that fans could experience it. Titled *Super Shadow Of The Beast*, the game is brighter, chippier and basically more ‘Super Nintendo’ than all other ports, and features remastered levels and the option to tweak the number of continues and difficulty level. Hallelujah!





TurboGrafx-CD

■ Despite producing one of the worst conversions of *Shadow Of The Beast*, Victor Technologies somehow also managed to produce one of the best with this fantastic port for the TurboGrafx-CD. This version is one of the best ports of *Shadow Of The Beast* out there and certainly the preeminent console port, in our opinion. It looks and animates great, and features a resplendent CD-quality score. Even better than that, the speed and reaction time of your hero has been finely tuned too, which makes dispatching enemies much easier and far less frustrating.

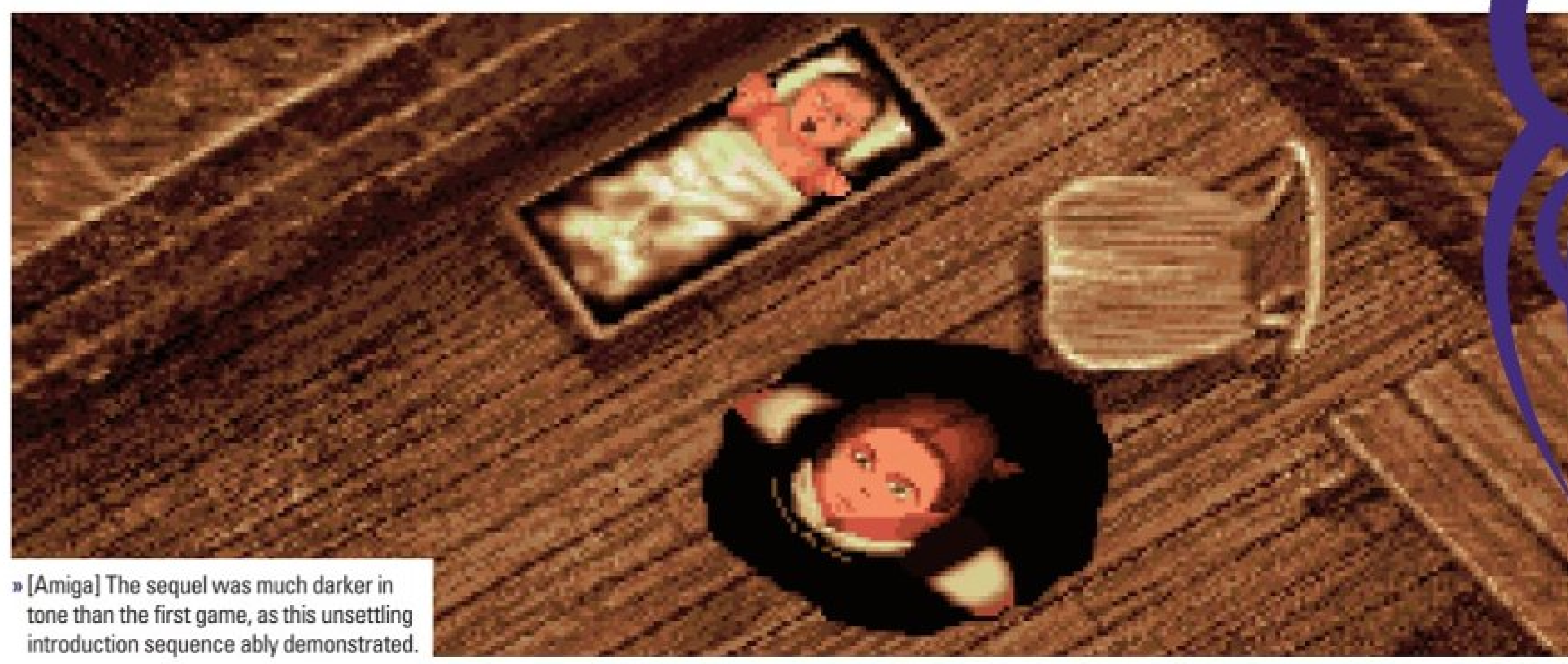




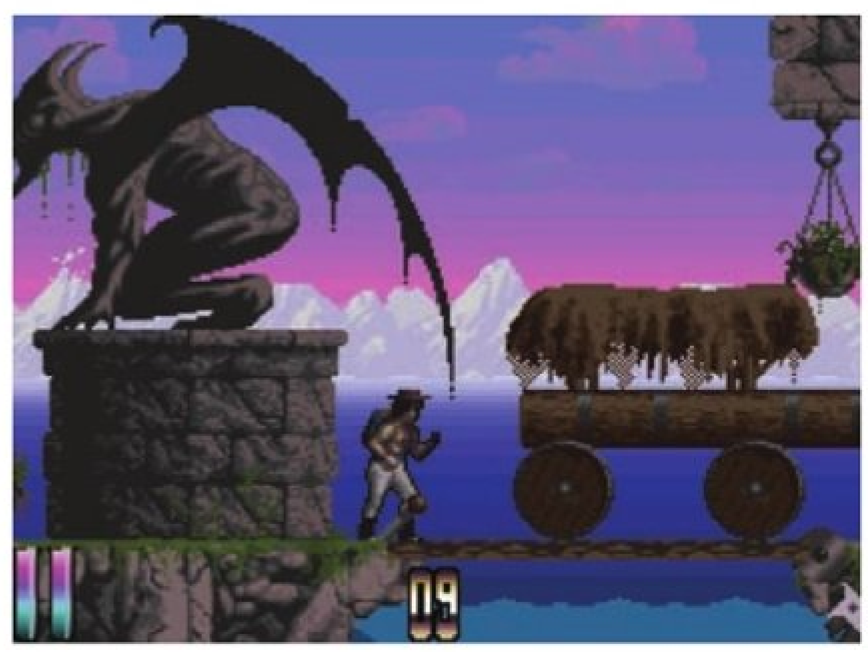




» [Mega Drive] The sequel was ported to the Mega Drive. It's a decent enough port, but just lacks the polish and lavish presentation of the Amiga version.



» [Amiga] The sequel was much darker in tone than the first game, as this unsettling introduction sequence ably demonstrated.



a step in the right direction for the series, and this was reflected in the significantly more positive review scores that the sequel received.

Shadow Of The Beast III

Playing the third *Beast*, it's clear that Reflections had been listening to feedback to deliver fans a memorable final hurrah for the series – one that not only looked and sounded great, but also played the part too. *Shadow Of The Beast III* shares very few similarities with its Marmitey predecessors, almost feeling like its own game in some respects.

Rather than taking place over one gargantuan world, the game is divided into four distinct levels, each uniquely themed and featuring imaginative, tricky but perfectly solvable puzzles – although many were once again one-chance affairs. Each stage now ended with a boss fight against the series' recurring villain, Maletoth, and featured handy respawn points, which, for the large portion of presumably now-balding fans of the series, was a bit like receiving manna from heaven.

The visuals and music, which saw Tim Wright return to scoring duties, were also as good as ever, and although the graphics obviously didn't quite have the same impact as the first two games, given that graphical standards had come on significantly in the three years between the release of *Beast I* and *III*, in terms of enemies and level design *Shadow Of The Beast III* is the most imaginative and varied of all the three titles. So did this new approach make working on the third game any more exciting?

"If I'm honest, it was less exciting than the first," Martin responds. "*Beast I* was our first dedicated Amiga game, it was earlier in the machine's life, and it was really pushing the graphics hardware to the limit. When you get used to a machine and what it can do, some of the magic fades and you're starting to think about what new machine is around the corner!"

Although these improvements were welcome, some were left feeling a bit cold by the changes. With the series now adopting a typical videogame paradigm of individual levels ending in boss fights, and the process repeating until the end credits, some felt that *Beast III* was less immersive as a result and lost a little of its atmospheric magic.

The game's length was also criticised by some. With just four stages and half a dozen puzzles to crack in each, *Beast III* was much shorter than the previous games. In fairness, though, this was pretty much the game's only real imperfection. Reflections had done a first-rate job in ending the *Beast* series on a high, and once again its efforts were duly rewarded with complimentary reviews. However, despite better games and a larger Amiga installed base, the sequels were hit hard by piracy and never got close to reaching the lofty sales of the original. And so it was time for Reflections to look to other games and other machines.

Fondly remembered more for its graphics and music than anything else, the *Beast* series is an odd trilogy of games but one that many Amiga owners hold dear to their hearts. So why does Martin think the series still strikes a chord with many gamers today?

"Partly because it came right out of nowhere, without a long-winded hype build-up. Partly because of the huge box, the Roger Dean artwork and T-shirt, and the feeling of substance that came with all of that. I also think people probably appreciated that we and Psygnosis took a bit of a risk in making a game on a pretty niche at the time machine that was impossible to replicate effectively on any other hardware system of the time. Yes, it ended up being ported to many others in the end, but almost all of them were so compromised due to the lack of the Amiga's hardware tricks. And finally, perhaps if you had a Commodore Amiga and were tired of lazy Atari ST ports to your machine and had been waiting for something to really show off what it could do – and make any Atari ST-owning friends turn very quiet in the process – then *Beast* did that."

We finish our time by asking Martin something we're sure all fans want to know: has Reflections ever considered returning to the series, and does he think there's still a place for the game in today's market?

"It's a nice thought, and I do get asked about it regularly, but I think we would have to beat something like *God Of War* now. Not a prospect I would relish! A simple scroller wouldn't cut the mustard these days with anyone but hardcore fans of the original."

Future Classic

Modern games you'll still be playing in years to come







INFO

- **Featured System:** Game Boy Advance
- **Year Released:** 2003
- **Publisher:** Sega
- **Developer:** Hitmaker/Treasure
- **Key People:** Hisao Oguchi (executive producer), Tetsu Okano (director), Naoki Kitagawa (main designer)

GO DEEPER

- ***Omega Factor* meshes different series and themes of Osamu Tezuka.**
- **This isn't the only licence Treasure has worked with, dabbling with *Tiny Toon Adventures, Bleach* and even McDonald's.**

07. ASTRO BOY: OMEGA FACTOR

Channelling the talents of Treasure and Hitmaker, Astro Boy weaved the creations of Osamu Tezuka into an accessible and impressively experimental shooter-adventure

THE BACKGROUND

Developed to coincide with the 40th anniversary of the anime version of *Astro Boy*, the iconic Japanese manga character that helped bring this brand of visual storytelling to the West, *Omega Factor* celebrates the legacy of the friendly robot boy. Even though co-developer Treasure's reputation is in hardcore arcade games, *Astro Boy* is very much targeted at a wide audience; as such, the generous difficulty settings and relatively light-hearted storyline are a left-field turn from other Treasure games.

While Astro Boy himself is the only playable character, Sega, Treasure and Hitmaker opted to make the overall arc of the story a tribute to creator Osamu Tezuka, broadly encapsulating a large volume of the *Astro Boy* canon. *Omega Factor* was crafted as the ultimate experience for fans of the character – while it doesn't follow any specific storyline from the manga or anime, the sheer number of cameos and variety of settings means that it explores each cornerstone of what makes the character so enduringly popular.

The pairing of the two studios, which had independently produced top-quality titles in the arcade shooter vein, resulted in a wonderfully constructed depiction of the 59-year-old icon and the futuristic universe he inhabits.

THE GAME

Any discussion gamers have about quality licensed games invariably veers towards the likes of *GoldenEye* and *Knights Of The Old Republic* – yet, while they are among the most high-profile of games based on movies, TV shows, comic books and other properties, they're by no means the only ones. We'd be surprised if there's a videogame that better captures the appeal of the fictional universe it depicts than *Astro Boy: Omega Factor*, a jam-packed, compulsively replayable arcade-style shooter that completely deviates from the norm within its genre.

Even though it's all obviously quite light, Saturday morning kids' TV fare, there's a lot of story in *Astro*

Things of note



Failure to match
To tie in with the already forgotten 2009 *Astro Boy* CGI movie, publisher D3 tried and failed to emulate the success of *Omega Factor* with its own game based on the series.



PS2 bellyflop
A PS2 *Astro Boy* game was released at the same time as *Omega Factor*, developed by Sonic Team, but it was critically panned despite being rather pretty.



Playing with style
It's not just identikit, skill-based shooting that players have to contend with – some levels take place in the dark while others are side-scrolling arcade outings.



Sense of humour
There's nothing odder than a sub-boss that is a duck, a rabbit and a horse riding in a big tyre. *Astro Boy* has a fair amount of comic relief to go with the robot massacring.



The sound of progress
Progression is linked to exploring the environment and meeting new characters, not combat. The vast majority of them are easy to find. Others, not so much.



» [GBA] Astro Boy's concentrated beam attack is satisfying to use on a row of giant enemies.



» [GBA] The game's opening level includes background references to Sega and Treasure.



What the press thought



Cubed3.com
Score: 9/10
"Treasure has hit the jackpot with this little gem. *Astro Boy* melds shooting, platforming and a bit of arcade action."



IGN.com
Score: 8.8/10
"Even with its flaws, the design and mechanics are so well-tuned that it's hard not to love *Omega Factor*."

Boy. A revolving door of colourful characters means it's heavier on narrative than previous Treasure titles, yet despite this, it's completely open and easy to grasp for anyone new to the character. The basic gameplay is a lot like *Gunstar Heroes* and just as fun, yet the progression is totally different.

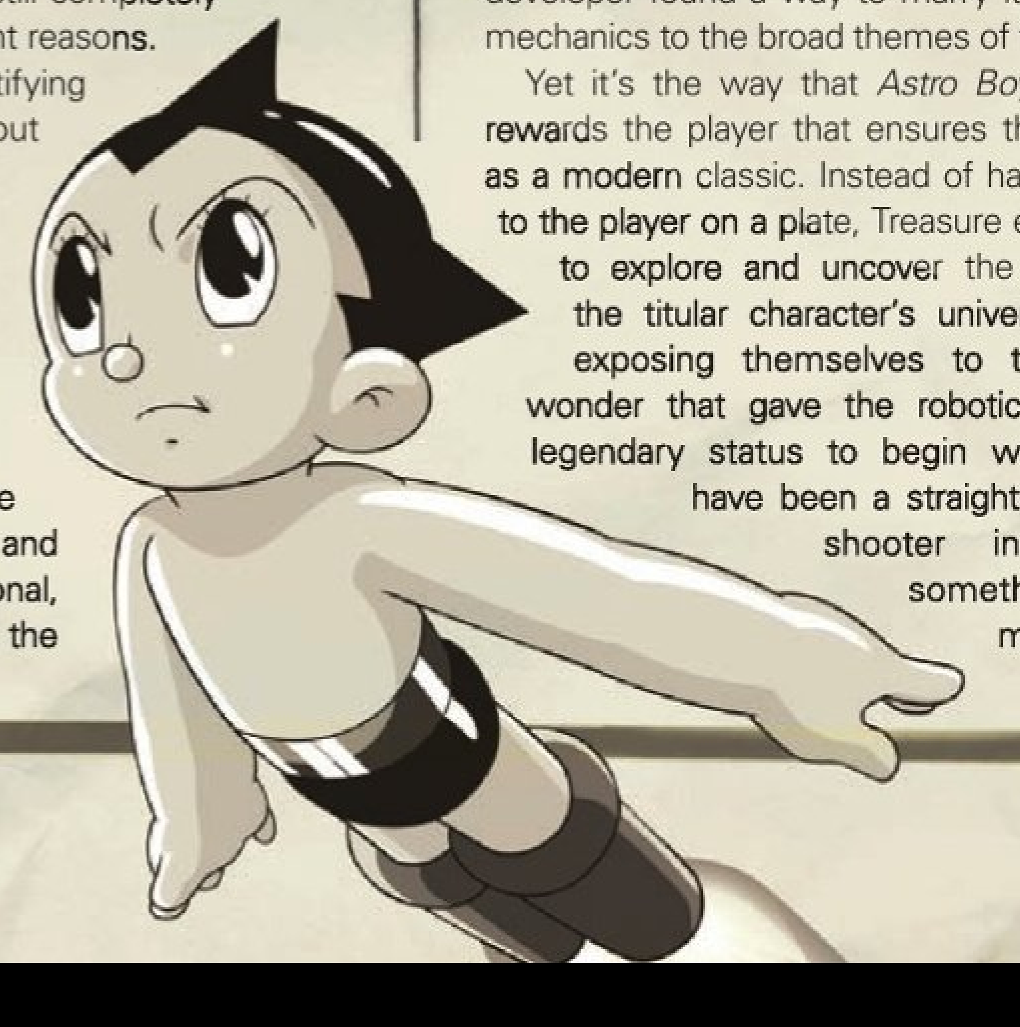
Each time you encounter a new character within a level, whether they're part of the story or hidden away, you gain an experience point to increase Astro Boy's power, health and so on. Typical of Treasure's titles, there are frenetic boss battles to overcome, but despite this you can blast your way to the end credits in an evening. What do you think happens after that? Closing credits and cheerful ending?

Well, you lose. Few titles have the daring to let you beat the final level and tell you that you've still lost, let alone a game based on a massively popular character, but that's exactly what the story in *Astro Boy: Omega Factor* does. There's no resolution the first time around – you have to fight for it.

See, upon beginning the game again as part of the time-travelling story, you're offered a level select to go back in time and correct Astro Boy's mistakes, piecing together the wider mystery of the story while also touching on the rather sad yet hopeful origins of the protagonist. Wonderfully, this second playthrough offers a whole heap of new levels and bosses that weren't there to begin with.

To really get to the end, though, you have to persevere and find all the secret characters hiding in bins, behind doors and all manner of other bizarre places. Shooting is no longer the point of the experience, then, which at that point has become second nature. Instead, *Omega Factor* transforms into an action-adventure of sorts; the experience changes entirely, yet you're still completely invested in it, now for different reasons. This is an enormously gratifying way to invoke replay value out of the game.

When that final ending arrives, the sense of reward is huge – it suddenly dawns on you that the first playthrough was really only the opening chapter of the game. While it may have the trappings and basic gameplay of a traditional, sophisticated Treasure game, the way the story unfolds is experimental and very enjoyable as a result.



WHY IT'S A FUTURE CLASSIC
Due to the smart way the story is put together, it's easy to get swept along by *Astro Boy* without any prior knowledge of the character – licensed games in future are unlikely to accomplish accessibility on the same level, if at all. This is a superb shooter, even by Treasure's intimidating standards, as the developer found a way to marry its own well-worn mechanics to the broad themes of the licence.

Yet it's the way that *Astro Boy: Omega Factor* rewards the player that ensures the game's status as a modern classic. Instead of handing the ending to the player on a plate, Treasure encouraged them to explore and uncover the small details of the titular character's universe, in doing so exposing themselves to the light-hearted wonder that gave the robotic champ such a legendary status to begin with. What could have been a straightforward Treasure shooter instead became something altogether more fascinating.

JET SET WILLY II

Given the huge success of Manic Miner and Jet Set Willy, a third Miner Willy game was not just inevitable but compulsory, yet Software Projects appeared incapable of delivering. Martyn Carroll talks to Derrick P Rowson, the programmer who came in and picked up the pieces



IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** SOFTWARE PROJECTS
- » **DEVELOPER:** SOFTWARE PROJECTS
- » **RELEASED:** 1985
- » **PLATFORMS:** CPC, SPECTRUM, C64, C16, BBC MICRO, ELECTRON, MSX, EINSTEIN, AMIGA
- » **GENRE:** PLATFORM

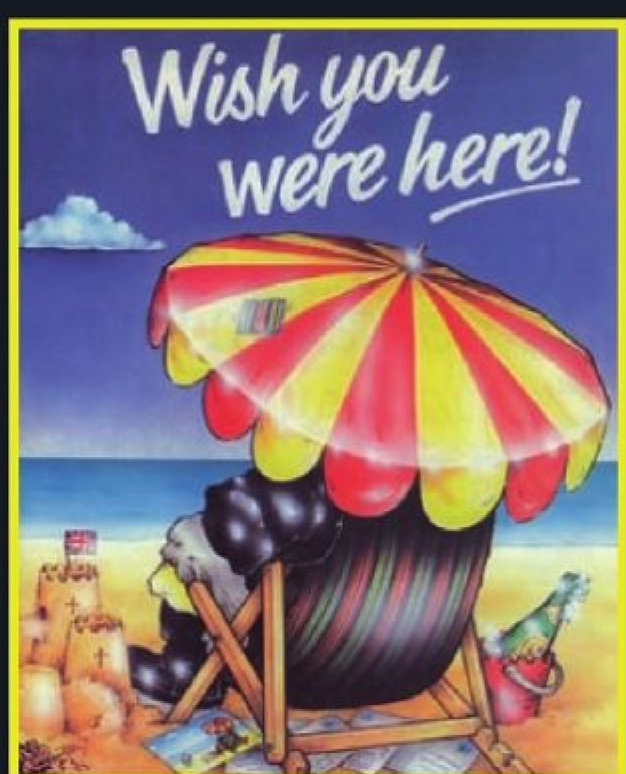
"The mythical *MegaTree*?" exclaims Derrick Rowson when asked about the infamous, unreleased game that was supposed to be the true sequel to *Jet Set Willy*. "It was drawn on a fag packet and discussed over a pint. I heard about it and knew all of those involved but I had nothing to do with it."

Derrick is probably wise to distance himself from that particular debacle. The story goes that Matthew Smith, livewire author of the Miner Willy games, was deemed to be a disruptive influence at Software Projects HQ in Liverpool. As a result, company directors Alan Maton and Tommy Barton relocated him to a house on Holt Road in Birkenhead and tasked him with knuckling down and knocking out *The MegaTree*.

Matthew, who was aged 18 at the time, was appointed two similarly-aged colleagues in the shape of Stuart Fotheringham and Marc Dawson. Left to their own devices, the three teenagers failed to come up with anything close to a finished game and the project was scrapped three months later. This left Software Projects with a gaping pit in its

"We decided to jump in feet-first. We would add a rocket and blast the player into space"

DERRICK ON UPGRADING MINER WILLY'S MANSION



» Promotional adverts for *Jet Set Willy II* played on the well-known desert island rumour.



release schedule. There would be no new Miner Willy game in stores for Christmas 1984, and unless Matthew could rediscover his former work ethic – which saw him write *Manic Miner* in just eight weeks – there might be no new Miner Willy game, period. The situation was looking forlorn when a surprise solution presented itself to the bosses.

Derrick Rowson and Steve Wetherill were two Software Projects programmers whose first job at the company was to convert *Manic Miner* and *Jet Set Willy* to the newly-released Amstrad CPC computer. Their version of *Manic Miner* was almost identical to the Spectrum original, but with *Jet Set Willy* they went a little crazy, expanding Willy's already substantial mansion by adding 74 new rooms to the original's 60. This new, super-sized version was subtitled *The Final Frontier*, as they'd placed a rocket on the roof which blasts Willy into outer space and beyond. There was so much extra content that Software Projects hatched a rather brazen plan to take the enhanced CPC version and release it for the Spectrum as *Jet Set Willy II*. "It was only meant to be a modification," says Derrick about the CPC conversion. "Alan Maton came to my office and asked me if I could rewrite it back onto the Spectrum. I said 'maybe', and that was enough for him to ask me to do it."

Although unplanned, it was fitting that Derrick should be involved in the further adventures of Miner Willy, as he was one of Matthew's closest friends at Software Projects.



» [Amstrad] The house on Holt Road, where some Software Projects staff lived and worked, makes an appearance.

In fact, it was Matthew who added Derrick to the payroll. "I had known Matthew since before he wrote *Manic Miner*," he says. "A group of us used to hang about at our local Tandy store and Matthew would pop in on his way home from school with his large brown briefcase tucked under his arm, and inquire what we were doing. We later heard about his ongoing escapades with *Manic Miner*, and he kept on saying that he was waiting for his 18th birthday so he could start his own business. He lived quite close to the shop and, as it was on my way home, I would walk with him.

"At the time I was unemployed, but computers seemed to be a logical expansion of my main interest, which was mathematics. I found that being profoundly deaf made most careers unsuitable, and yet on a computer you only needed logic and no-one to talk to. I taught myself Z80 coding, which seemed to be pretty easy, and over the months I showed some of my code to Matthew. You can imagine my surprise when he said, 'Come and work for me'."

Software Projects occupied part of the sprawling Bear Brand Complex, a former wartime munitions factory in Allerton Park, Liverpool. Derrick remembers that when he joined the firm it was very much in its infancy. "For the first couple of months we more or less just hung around this empty factory block. There were no desks, chairs or even computers in the place and over the months we watched it being built. On one of our shopping trips with Matthew we bought some Tandy TRS-80 Model 4 computers and a huge 24-pin line printer."

With the new kit, Derrick and Steve began to work on the CPC conversion of *Manic Miner*. The bosses wanted the game finished as quickly as possible, hence assigning two men to the job, but there were a couple of major hurdles to overcome. The first was that the Amstrad computer was a brand new box of tricks. "We knew absolutely nothing about the machine and we spent weeks writing test routines to try and understand its limits. We were given some pre-release Amstrad software that I considered to be ghastly, which is why we spent so long studying the hardware." Having worked out how to get the best from the CPC, they



» [BBC Micro] With all these new rooms being built, Miner Willy could really do with a quantity surveyor.



» [MSX] Venture past The MegaTree on the MSX and Einstein, and you'll discover this extra screen.

MINER VERSIONS

JET SET WILLY II APPEARED ON almost as many systems as the original game, and each version is unique or interesting in some way. On the Commodore 64 you can jump into the toilet at the beginning of the game and discover two extra screens – Now Your In It (sic) and To Thy Grave. The MSX and Tatung Einstein versions also feature a couple of addition screens – The Maze and Transmat Testing Bay – and both are harder to find and more rewarding than those on the C64. The Commodore 16 version, converted by Tynesoft, is a curious one, as due to lack of memory it's missing around 50 screens, and those that remain are split across four separate loads.

The most intriguing version, however, can be found on the BBC Micro, where Tynesoft issued separate disk and tape releases. The disk version is more or less the full game, yet on tape nearly all of the original *JSW* screens have been removed, leaving just the new ones (plus two BBC-specific screens – Fallout Shelter and Ethel the Aardvark). The map has been cleverly altered so that you can begin exploring the new screens almost straight away. As such, this version better suits the sequel tag as nearly all of the content is fresh. The Electron version is the same as the BBC Micro tape release, only with fewer on-screen colours.

The Amiga version, released belatedly in 1992, introduces updated graphics and screens that scroll rather than flip. The map is faithful to the original, although it looks and feels like a very different game.



» [Amstrad] There's only one way off the Deserted Isle – an invisible teleport that beams you up into space.

then discovered that no *Manic Miner* source code would be provided. Luckily, Derrick had previously developed his own disassembler which proved invaluable. "Steve hacked into the game using my disassembler and delivered me the room, sprite and block data which I then slotted into our code. At no time was any help offered by way of source code."

Having overcome these initial problems with *Manic Miner*, the pair were able to hit the ground running when it came to converting *Jet Set Willy*. There was even time to address some of the faults in the original. "I decided we needed to fix the bugs in the room layout. The jumps that allowed the player to access screens that didn't exist and jump instead to other screens seemed to be an easy fix, so I planned on changing the layout." Derrick is referring to those leaps of faith in the original Spectrum version that would warp Willy to unexpected places, such as when you jumped off the top of rooms like Rescue Esmeralda and Watch Tower. "Rescue Esmeralda just needed a new room bolting on top [The Belfry]. We then discussed how we could get around the Watch Tower problem, and we knew of the stories and rumours that circulated about the original game, so we decided to jump in feet-first. We would add a rocket and blast the player into space! Steve produced the Miner Willy space suite sprite while I coded in the rocket and the special effects that went with it. It seemed only natural to end up on a starship."

This sojourn into space allowed them to conjure up lots of wacky new screens. "I was aware that memory was going to be an issue somewhere along the line and decided to write an editor to allow the new rooms to be added, and then I implemented a simple compression method for the data. Once we could add new rooms anywhere, we really got stuck in. Steve wrote the routines for moving floors [seen in The Trouble With Tribbles screen] and was very busy adding new sprites. Steve would suggest a scenario and then we would design the rooms to suit. Each of the rooms in space was basically a skit at someone or something, or was us trying to see what could be forced from the game engine. Eggoids was to see how far we could push our sprite routines. The Incredible Big Hole In The Ground screens were Steve implementing sprites that only appear in one direction."

While most of the new screens were created outside of Willy's mansion, they weren't yet finished with his not-so-humble abode. Matthew had left several gaps in the game map and they began to fill them in. "As the game development continued, we added the rooms in the middle of the house purely as padding. We were aware that they needed to be easy to play, as we already knew how difficult it was to wander around this house that Matthew had built. Rooms such as Dumb Waiter poked fun at Imagine's *Wacky Waiters* and made me add the lifts." The biggest empty space was located between The Forgotten Abbey and The Security Guard, which allowed for a vast new basement section to be built. "For the lower rooms, Steve came up with relevant names based on his experience as a pit trainee doing underground experience in Yorkshire."



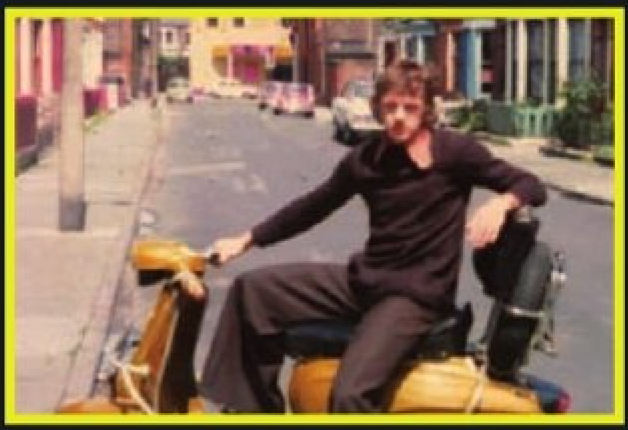


DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

THRUSTA (PICTURED)
SYSTEMS: SPECTRUM, C64
YEAR: 1983

MANIC MINER
SYSTEM: SPECTRUM, C64, CPC, ORIC, DRAGON PLUS OTHERS
YEAR: 1983

JET SET WILLY
SYSTEM: SPECTRUM, MSX, BBC MICRO, C16 PLUS OTHERS
YEAR: 1984



» Derrick, in a picture taken in the Seventies, before he was bitten by the programming bug.



> **"It never occurred to us to ask permission to make these changes and no one seemed to mind"** DERRICK ON BEING LEFT TO HIS OWN DEVICES



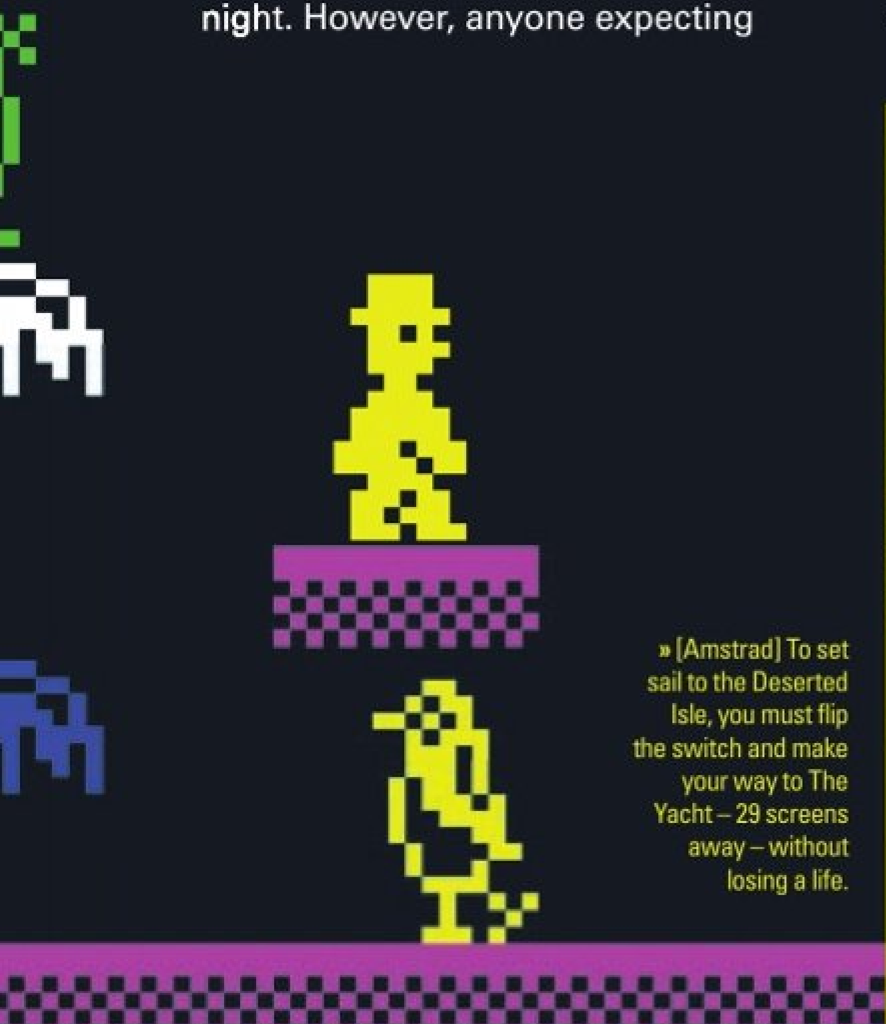
Two of the most memorable new screens would probably never be seen by many players, simply because they were so damned tricky to reach. The first was the Deserted Isle, which was included in response to a letter printed in *Your Spectrum* issue 7. A certain Robin Daines of Chester claimed that, in the original Spectrum game, if you visited Willy's yacht at a certain time you'd be whisked off to a desert island. The letter was of course a wind-up, but it clearly fooled a lot people and convinced Derrick and Steve to make the rumour a reality. "On one of our brainstorming sessions we decided to add the yacht sailing out to a desert isle, which was another rumour at the time. In the lower rooms we had already added a trip-switch, which was originally going to turn the lights out for a few seconds. I really wanted the lights to turn out and for Willy to be illuminated with a torch, but this idea was soon ditched as I couldn't see how I could implement a circle of light that followed Willy around. The switch was used to activate the yacht instead."

The other notable screen was the final one. If you collected at least 150 of the 175 objects, Maria would allow Willy to retire for the night. However, anyone expecting the original's head-down-the-toilet ending was in for a nice surprise, as Willy is unexpectedly whisked off to The Central Cavern, the iconic first screen from *Manic Miner*. "The recurring nightmare ending was a joint idea," says Derrick. "On the internet people ask why The Central Cavern is not playable. It's simply to do with the code. Only eight cell types are permitted and crumbling floors is not one of them. We would have needed to add too much code to the basic routines just so it could be played. I would hazard a guess that if I had written the code to play it, then players would have expected it to go to the next screen. At what point would it have turned from Willy's nightmare to mine?"

The pair were largely left alone as they added new rooms and features, but the bosses were about to call time on the development. "Alan and others from management would pop into our office and see how we were progressing. It never occurred to us to ask permission to make these changes and no one seemed to mind, but 'get a move on' was the message we got. For his own reasons, Steve did not want to be in the office during normal work hours. I would spend the day in the office on my own, but come home time Steve would come into work and I would spend another five hours with him. The hours I worked got longer and longer and most nights Alan would drive me home at 10 o'clock while Steve would spend the night at work and leave as I came in. This was how most of the game was written.

"The final push to finish was a nightmare. I went to work on a Friday morning and was told that the game must be on Tommy's desk by Monday morning. I spent the day trying to finish off all of the little bits that needed doing. Steve arrived as he normally did as everyone was going home. We worked together all Friday night and right through Saturday and Sunday, only taking breaks to prepare our food, which we ate while staring at the screen, typing frantically to try and finish the code. We finally finished in the early hours of Monday morning. I was so tired I needed to sleep but could not switch off. I spent all of Monday in my office. I suppose I was expecting a fanfare or something. None came."

While the management weren't popping champagne corks for Derrick and Steve, Amstrad owners everywhere would soon be singing their praises as the CPC version was superior to the Spectrum original in almost every regard. Obviously





» [Amstrad] To set sail to the Deserted Isle, you must flip the switch and make your way to The Yacht – 29 screens away – without losing a life.



MAPPED OUT

ONE OF THE most interesting new screens is the Cartography Room which, as the name suggests, features a mini version of the game's map. It was added during development to enable Derrick and Steve to quickly access any screen, and the secret code which activated this feature was left in the Amstrad version of *JSW*. "I don't think most people know of the code even now," says Derrick. "You can access it by typing 'HIEMMRAIDNAPRRRTT' whilst playing the game and then pressing Escape. The Cartography Room will be displayed and a cross can be moved so you can pick out a start room. All of the versions of the game I have played on a PC using an emulator have managed to corrupt the Cartography Room's data with their hacks. With this facility built into the game, why hack it?"



JET SET WILLY II

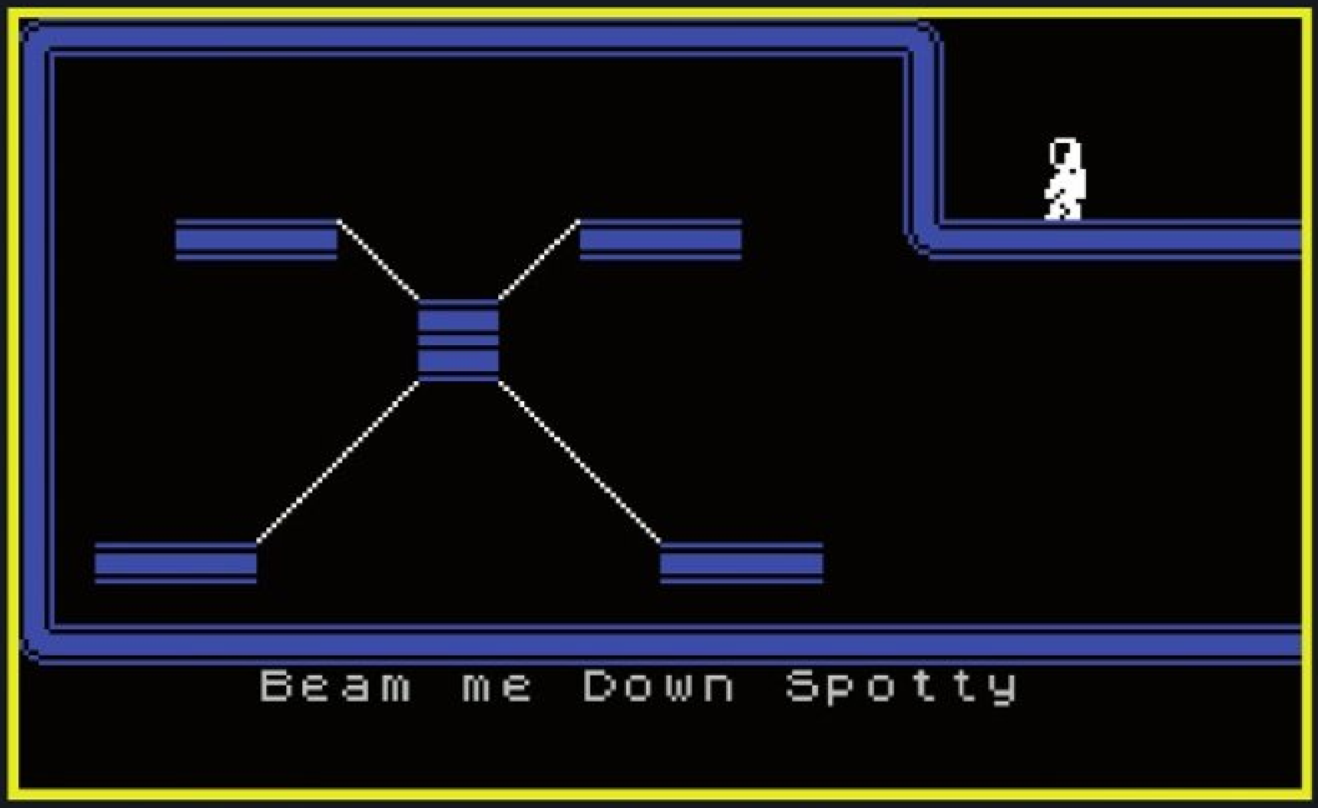
there were all of the extra screens to explore, but there were also a number of little tweaks that improved the gameplay. Willy now moved quicker and he was more agile – you could hold the opposite direction during a jump and he'd leap the other way as soon as he landed, giving players a better chance of escaping sticky situations. Crippling bugs such as the infinite death loop – where a dodgy jump could deplete all of your lives in a flash – had been fixed and it was also possible to actually complete the game (unlike the Spectrum, Commodore 64, and BBC Micro versions). In fact, the bugs in the original Spectrum version were one of the reasons why *Jet Set Willy II* was given the go-ahead. "It seemed just as easy to exploit this new version as it was to fix the old," says Derrick. "It would allow for a re-release that was an update and not just a version that had no bugs."

The Amstrad conversion was released in April 1985 and Steve left Software Projects shortly after to join Odin Computer Graphics, another Liverpool-based developer. Derrick, meanwhile, got stuck straight into rewriting the expanded game back to the Spectrum as *Jet Set Willy II*. He explains: "The main core of the code could be rewritten quite easily as one of the first decisions we made with the Amstrad version was to change the screen aspect ratio to emulate the Spectrum's screen. Steve's moving floors presented problems and other bits and pieces forced me to implement a small copy screen just for the local area around Willy. Whereas Matthew copied the whole screen into a buffer and then copied the screen plus sprites onto the playing screen, the Amstrad version did all of the work on the playing screen and relied on colours to detect collisions with a routine I had worked out to stop flicker. On the Spectrum I had problems trying to detect sprite collisions and my new method was to copy the relevant screen area to a small buffer, then remove all of the playing graphics from it, and if anything was left then Willy died. When it came time to write the keyboard input routine, I suddenly found that whole blocks of code needed changing. Once I committed myself to these changes, I decided to restructure the game code."

Being mathematically minded, Derrick set about the challenge of optimising the code and making it as efficient as possible. "I was used to modifying code and making one routine do multiple tasks. It makes it very difficult to follow, but it allows the code to massively shrink. Matthew's code was normally written in one go. He had the knack of using Z80 code like prose. He would work through problems, programming as he went. The code that came out would in essence be the final code and, as simplistic as it was, it worked. He had no need to rewrite code over and over again in order to reduce its size. I was only concerned with



» [Spectrum] The sequel re-coloured lots of screens and made minor changes to the layout. Compare the Cold Store as seen in the original (left) and the sequel (right).



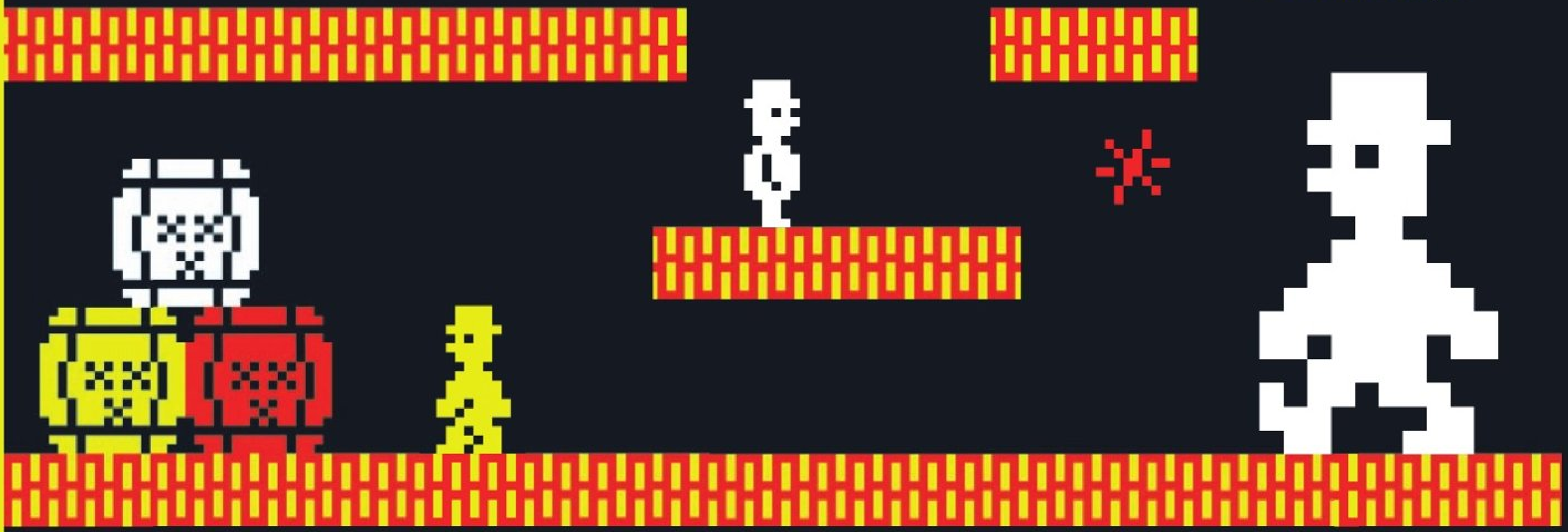
» [Spectrum] Using this teleportation device, you can beam down to an alien planet or return to the house.

MR JET SET

MINER WILLY WAS Matthew Smith's creation, so we thought it only right to have a quick chat with the man himself and find out why he wasn't more involved in the sequel, and what he thought of the end result.

"The sequel was all Derrick and Steve's work," he told us. "While they were doing that, I was supposed to be doing *The MegaTree*, so I was very hands-off. I'd just pop in and say hello and see how they were doing. I was very impressed with the compressed screens, because I was sceptical about compression at the time and it took a long while to convince me that it was worth the effort. They also addressed the major gameplay flaw in *JSW*, where you jumped from one screen to another and died straight away and then lost all of your lives. They fixed that by making you reappear in the last safe place. So the sequel was more like a second edition – double the size and with all the bugs removed."

Before we let Matthew go, we mentioned a story Derrick told us, about how he'd once given Derrick a lift home in his battered car and purposely crashed it into a skip. "That was just my normal parking technique," he answers dryly. "I learnt to drive on the dodgems."



JET SET STRIPPED

TO CONFUSE MATTERS, there are actually two versions of *Jet Set Willy* on the Amstrad CPC – one with all the new screens (subtitled *The Final Frontier*) and one that only features the screens from the Spectrum original. The bog-standard version was actually created later on, specifically for Ocean's *They Sold a Million* compilation. Software Projects wanted to continue selling the expanded version, so Derrick was asked to produce a version with all of the extra screens stripped out. This he duly did, although he couldn't resist adding a new feature in the shape of a high score table.



» [Amstrad] For the stripped-down version, Derrick even went to the trouble of reinstating the original's 'up chuck' ending.

» This memorable Software Projects advert features the key players in our story. From the far right, moving up the queue: Derrick Rowson, Alan Maton (with his arm around Willy), and Steve Wetherill.



reducing the code as far as possible in as short a time as possible. Nearly every routine was examined, and if I considered it too bloated it would be rewritten. Each little attack at the code reduced it bit further. It took me nearly as long to squash it down as it did to write the Amstrad version."

This smarter, streamlined code meant that the game was not just double the size of Matthew's version, but ran noticeably quicker. Derrick's final step was to actually let players know that all of the extra screens were included. The game was, after all, marketed as a sequel. "I decided that the rewrite needed to show that it was not the same as the original *Jet Set Willy*, which is why I added the demo flicking through all of the rooms at the start. I knew for a lot of people that the demo would be the only time they ever saw some of them. For most players the game was too difficult to reach the outer extremes of the map, and that's without the task of collecting the objects. I wish I had allowed the player to have started in either the Cartography Room or the Bathroom, and perhaps granted extra lives for the number of items collected so far."

Keen to capitalise on the 'new' Miner Willy game, Software Projects had people working on ports to

"At Software Projects, Matthew stood out for being an honest, likeable person"

DERRICK ON HIS FRIEND, MINER WILLY CREATOR MATTHEW SMITH

other machines. The Commodore 64 conversion was handled by John Darnell and Steve Birtles, two other inhabitants of the company's coding block known as the 'Zoo'. "John and Steve worked in an office at the extreme end of a long corridor – I was at one end and they were at the other. They were writing *Jet Set Willy II* for the C64 at the same time as I was doing the Spectrum version. No cross platform talk took place. The zoo analogy comes from the fact that we all worked in isolation from each other, and were very territorial. Split into camps of Z80 and 6502, split into separate rooms. There was 'us', the programmers, and 'them', the bosses up at the main offices, our keepers."

Of those keepers, Derrick remained on good terms with the man who brought him in. "Of all the bunch at Software Projects, Matthew stood out not for being a boss, not for being in a world of his own, but for being an honest, likeable person. When the coding was taking place, he would pop in and out of the building and most conversations resulted in diversions down other paths. He'd show me madcap books about how to grow grass on walls and other weird things. His mind was ticking over at a furious rate. Other times he seemed confused. The saddest bit is that he could have designed all of the new rooms if he had wanted. In fact, just before it was finished, he asked Steve and I if we wanted help in designing rooms, but by then it was too late so we declined.

"It's 25 years since I wrote the game and I was not aware of the stories and cult that had surrounded Matthew. It came as a shock to actually go on the internet and search out my name. What started out as curiosity turned to amazement at all the stuff that was written – some of which just builds on stories that others have written, but which have no basis in fact. I was instructed to leave Steve's name out of the credits for *Jet Set Willy II* as he had no part in coding it back to the Spectrum, yet he was as much a part of it as I am. Okay, I'm the guy who shoehorned it into the Spectrum, but Steve is just as much the author as Matthew and I. I am proud of what I wrote and I am glad to have had the opportunity to have written it, but I wouldn't jump at the chance of repeating the hours needed to do the code."

Jet Set Willy II may not have been the follow-up that many fans expected or indeed wanted it to be, but then the authors never expected it to be released as a sequel either. It was just a faithful update that squashed the bugs and beefed up the room count, and at least it actually escaped from the 'Zoo' which is more than can be said for *The MegaTree*, or the even more mysterious and unreleased game *Miner Willy Meets The Taxman*.

"Did I mention that I started work on the *Taxman* game?" asks Derrick, just as we're about to close the book on Miner Willy once and for all. "But that's another story..."









» YOUR ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO FORGOTTEN GAME SYSTEMS

OBSCURA MACHINA

#5 Satellaview



» The form factor of the hardware is similar to that chosen for the 64DD.

Console add-ons are a constant of the videogame world and come in all kinds of varieties, from the Famicom Disk System to Kinect, but few are more interesting than the Satellaview. Launched on 23 April 1995 as an add-on for the Super Famicom, the Satellaview was designed to receive signals from the St.GIGA satellite radio service owned and operated by TV company WOWOW. These signals, broadcast at scheduled times each day, allowed Super Famicom owners to essentially download games and other content, nearly a decade before services like Xbox Live popularised the concept.

Satellaview's technology is primitive compared to what we have today, of course, but in 1995 it was pretty cool stuff. A satellite dish would receive signals transmitted by St.GIGA and these would then pass to the BS Tuner, usually used to play St.GIGA's regular broadcasts, which would transmit the data to the Satellaview. If the optional 8Mb memory pack was plugged into the Application Cartridge, the downloaded data could be saved and stored for another day.

Satellaview downloads came in three different categories: magazines that could be read on screen, a little like Teletext; data for existing Satellaview-compatible Super Famicom cartridges; and, of course, downloadable games. File size restrictions, owing to the low transfer speeds and storage space, meant that most games were divided into up to four episodes over a weekly or daily schedule, and were downloaded through the Application Cartridge's playable menu, named BS-X The City Whose Name Has Been Stolen. It's an inexplicable name but, fortunately, the software itself is a little easier to explain. Resembling a city like the one in *EarthBound*, the game allows you to roam from one building to another, each one containing downloaded software or a link to something new. It was a fun menu system, although it did require you to know what was being broadcast at that specific time, either by referencing the Super Famicom Hour tables that could be periodically downloaded or by reading *Satellaview Tsushin*, a paper magazine from the makers of *Weekly Famitsu*.



All of the games available on Satellaview could be categorised into four separate types: Best Selection games were re-releases or remakes of bestselling Famicom or Super Famicom cartridge games; Monthly Event games were scheduled contests that awarded prizes to the highest-scoring players in the country; BS Original games were completely new games made exclusively for Satellaview and rarely, if ever, re-released on cartridge. Most interesting of all, however, was Satellaview's most distinguishing type of download: SoundLink games.

These were pretty ingenious creations. Combining videogames with radio drama, they asked players to play games at scheduled times in order to take in live voice acting, broadcast directly into their Super Famicom to deliver voiced story scenes and narrated gameplay challenges or hints. The most famous example of these is the series of *Zelda* games that Nintendo developed exclusively for Satellaview. Three out of the four

JUST THE FACTS

A total of eight Super Famicom carts allowed users to download additional data through the Satellaview service.

The total number of St.GIGA subscribers fell by 60 per cent in the year following the Satellaview service's discontinuation.

Popular games magazines like *Famitsu* and *Nintendo Power* could be downloaded and read on the Satellaview.

As well as SoundLink games, there were SoundLink magazines, featuring recordings from famous Japanese comedians.

Two Satellaview-compatible Super Famicom games also had 8Mb memory cards released with data pre-installed on them.

Some Satellaview games locked up after a certain number of playthroughs, making even 8Mb memory card saves redundant.

A Satellaview successor of sorts was Randnet, an online download service for the 64DD. It operated for just one year.

The 2010 DS game *Fire Emblem: Heroes Of Light And Shadow* contained the Satellaview *Fire Emblem* series as bonus content, marking the first time a Satellaview game has been re-released on a separate format. A promising sign…

Nintendo's Satellaview was way ahead of its time and introduced a wealth of innovative content to Super Famicom owners. But it's also proved to be a nightmare for retro obsessives and collectors

PERFECT THREE

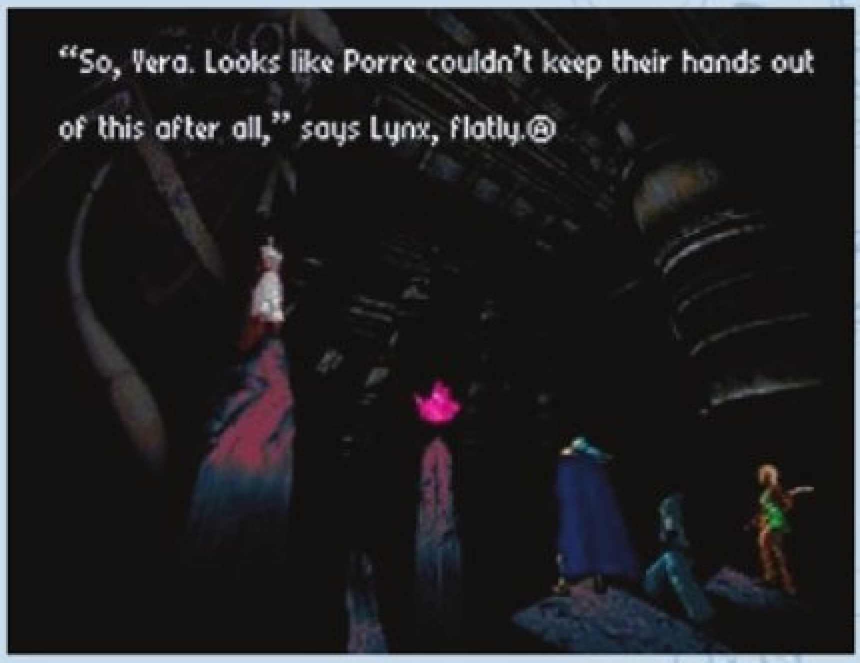
BS THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: ANCIENT STONE TABLETS

■ Of the four Satellaview *Zelda* games, this was the best. Featuring live voice acting and an original timed quest, it's one of Nintendo's most desirable 'lost' games.



RADICAL DREAMERS

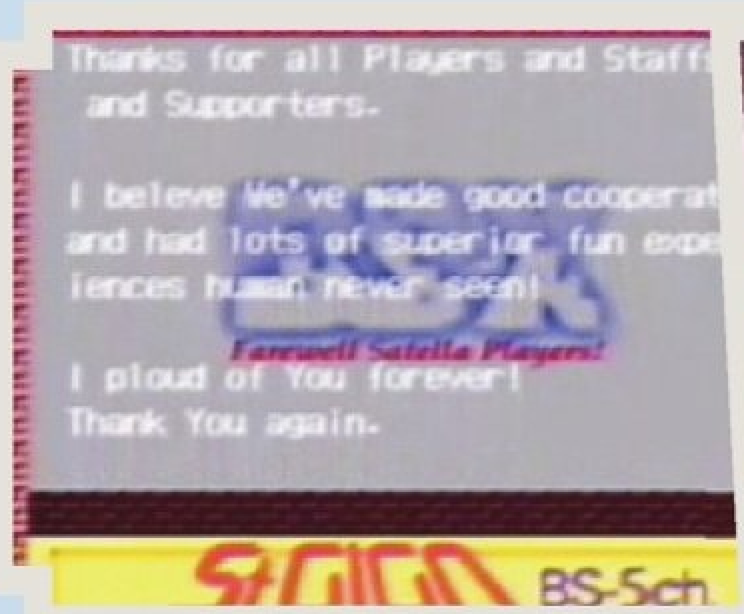
■ A text adventure sequel to *Chrono Trigger*, *Radical Dreamers* inspired the PSone sequel, *Chrono Cross*, but is often considered to be the superior work. A fan translation was released in 2003.



EXCITEBIKE BUN BUN MARIO BATTLE STADIUM

■ A 16-bit remake of *Excitebike* featuring the cast of the *Super Mario* games. This is a fun, import-friendly game and a perfect companion to *Super Mario Kart*.

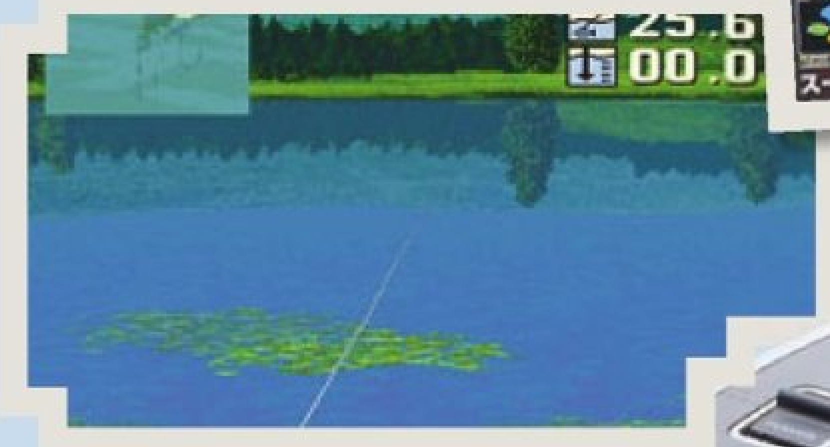




» The final day of Satellaview broadcasting on 30 June 2000 featured a sentimental farewell message from St.GIGA in Japanese and English.



» *Sound Novel Tsukuru* was a cartridge game that allowed players to create their own text adventures. It used Satellaview in order to download new stories.



» Shigesato Itoi's *No 1 Bass Fishing* was an angling game from the creator of *EarthBound*, which allowed players to compete across the world. Itoi himself often took part in the events.





were SoundLink games, and their evolution demonstrates just how much Nintendo's approach to 'live gameplay' matured over the years. The first game, *BS The Legend Of Zelda*, originally broadcast in August 1995, was a strictly scheduled game that progressed from chapter to chapter at the same time for all active players. Interstitial scenes would pause the gameplay so that the voice actors could perform the drama or direct instructions to the players. 1997's *BS The Legend Of Zelda: Ancient Stone Tablets*, on the other hand, imparted its narration and story scenes without pausing the action, allowing the player to keep moving through the game world while the cast spoke over the top of the action. The scope and ambition of the concept also grew, with the cast of voice actors increasing from three to five.

Despite being a fairly niche service, Satellaview was a surprising success. Over the years it was graced with tons of games across a wealth of popular Nintendo franchises, and it continued to broadcast content every day for over five years, from April 1995 to June 2000. It's quite incredible when you consider that the Super Famicom's successor had been available in Japan for four years by that point.

The unusual nature of the Satellaview makes it a particularly attractive device for Nintendo fans, but it's also a rather frustrating one. The fact that the vast majority of its games were never re-released on cartridge makes it very difficult to find physical copies of them. Collectors are forced to scour auctions for Nintendo's rewritable memory cards in the hope that they contain a game they don't own or, better still, one that hasn't yet been archived by the emulation community surrounding the Satellaview. Some games, meanwhile, are next to impossible to play as originally intended, particularly SoundLink and Monthly Event games, because of the way they relied on live participation and real-time scheduling. Some of the most highly regarded games, such as the *Zelda* titles, are playable under emulation, but even these modified versions don't represent a faithful re-creation without live voice acting.

As retro gamers, we should all be interested in the preservation of classic games, and the difficulty of playing Satellaview titles reminds us of the perils facing games in the online age. How will our Xbox Live Arcade games fare should Microsoft shut down the servers? Will future generations ever get to play *1 vs 100*, the live quiz game that Microsoft closed down in 2010? It seems like nobody has yet learned any lessons from the Satellaview.



In the chair with...

AL LOWE

Sometimes referred to (by himself) as the world's oldest games designer, Al Lowe has brought us some of the most iconic games in the adventure genre. His work helped define what gamers would come to expect of a great graphic adventure. Cole Machin speaks with him about his impressive career

FROM CHILDREN'S GAMES to the notoriously adult-themed *Leisure Suit Larry*, Al Lowe really has done it all. He has worked on some of the most loved adventure games of all time, having aided in the creation of games in the *King's Quest* and *Police Quest* series, as well as designing and writing his own *Leisure Suit Larry* games. In fact, he may just be the man most responsible for opening the door to games that offer humour as a primary element of the experience. It's hard to imagine that, had things gone just a little differently, he may have spent his entire career working for a school board…

RETRO GAMER: In the interest of starting at the beginning, let's talk a little bit about how you first came to find yourself in the gaming industry.

AL LOWE: I was 35 years old and had been a teacher 14 or 15 years. I was at the top of the salary scale; I had nowhere left to go as far as advancement was concerned. I was looking towards the next 20 years of my life with no additional salary. I had a new child and computers seemed like a growing field.

I backed away from teaching in a slow, stealthy manner. I got an account on the school district's mini-computer and started programming, not with any intent of changing careers but to make my job easier. The school district had gone through some cutbacks. I was an administrator, but they didn't have any secretaries or any assistants to help us with typing. Thankfully I was a good typist, but I saw word processing as a way to save myself a whole lot of work. But they wouldn't buy me a word processor because the software was $8,000 and, 'No one would ever use a word processor except the superintendent's secretary and she doesn't want it. So you don't get one.' It was a little short-sighted. It seemed obvious to me, but I guess not to everyone.

I started working on that computer and one thing led to another. I wrote a few little things in BASIC to help me do my job. By the time I was finished, I made a sellable product. So when the Apple II came out, I thought, 'I bet I could move this to the Apple.' And that's what I did.

I got into programming through the back door. I worked on some software on my own time. I let the school district use it for free, but I sold it to other people.

RG: Considering that start, how was it that you came to develop games as opposed to, for lack of a better term, more serious software such as the word processor you had worked on?

AL: In 1982, I went to a music convention at a Kansas City hotel. When the convention ended, as they took down the signs for my convention, I saw them put up signs for something called a National Education Computing conference. Since I had written that software used by educators, I thought I may as well hang around for a few more days and see what happens. Either that, or be bored silly at my in-laws' house. It changed my life. Seeing the level of commercial software in 1982, I realised the stuff I did wasn't so bad. I felt I could make something better than most of what they showed there. So I did.

My son and I loved playing adventure games; we owned several Sierra titles. So, when I made my games, they wound up looking like Sierra games because that's what we liked. When I showed my games to Ken and Roberta Williams, Ken said, 'Berta, these look like your games.' I was honoured and thrilled.

RG: So that's how you began your relationship with Sierra: by approaching the company with some of your early games?

AL: No, they actually found me. I had created two games and took them to some California computer conferences. I had the idea in



SELECTED TIMELINE

- **Dragon's Keep** 1982
- **Bop-A-Bet** 1982
- **Troll's Tale** 1983
- **Hi-Res Adventure #6: The Dark Crystal** 1983
- **A Gelfling Adventure** 1983
- **Home Word Speller** 1983
- **Home Word Filer** 1983
- **Winnie The Pooh In The Hundred Acre Woods** 1984
- **King's Quest II** 1985
- **King's Quest III** 1986
- **The Black Cauldron** 1986
- **Donald Duck's Playground** 1986
- **Mickey's Space Adventure** 1986
- **Leisure Suit Larry** 1987
- **Police Quest** 1987
- **Space Quest II** 1987
- **King's Quest IV** 1988
- **Leisure Suit Larry 2** 1988
- **Leisure Suit Larry 3** 1989
- **The Laffer Utilities** 1990
- **Leisure Suit Larry Remake** 1991
- **Leisure Suit Larry 5** 1991
- **Freddy Pharkas: Frontier Pharmacist** 1993
- **Leisure Suit Larry 6** 1993
- **King's Quest VII** 1994
- **Leisure Suit Larry's Greatest Hits & Misses** 1994
- **Torin's Passage** 1995
- **Leisure Suit Larry 7** 1996
- **Leisure Suit Larry's Casino** 1998

"The more cooks there are in the kitchen, the more you're going to wind up with a bland goulash"

July, shortly before the very first commercial graphics software was released for the Apple II. I bought a copy and in August and September, while working full-time at my school job, I wrote two games. My wife figured out how to package them and market them. She put them in plastic baggies and we ran ads in educational magazines. I looked at the software that was then available and realised that I could make games, that were fun but also educational. That was my breakthrough; why we were successful. Because we were gamers, my games were fun first, and educational, too.

In early November 1982, Applefest was held in San Francisco. My wife and I spent a lot of money to rent a booth. We set up our home Apple computer with a 13-inch colour monitor, along with a friend's Apple and colour monitor, and showed our two games. Every publisher in the business was there, and they all came by our tiny booth. I met the founders of all the major software companies, because they were all so small. The Carlsons from Brøderbund, the Williamses from Sierra, and everyone else who published software then. They all liked my games and wanted us to create games for them and let them worry about the packaging, marketing and sales.

That seemed good to us, as we quickly realised that loading boxes and waiting for the UPS truck was no fun. After talks with all the publishers, Sierra offered us the best deal. Plus, they were local, since we lived in Fresno and they were nearby in Oakhurst. 16 years later I was still with them.

RG: Speaking of your relationship with Sierra, during Sierra's massive 1984 firing spree you were let go from Sierra proper and moved into contract work for the company. It seems like a somewhat unusual move on Sierra's part, in that it would then owe you a royalty per unit sold. Can you tell us why Sierra may have made this decision?

AL: I can tell you almost verbatim what Ken Williams told me. He said they were having cash flow problems. The 25 programmers were employees and a major expense to the company, subtracting directly from their profitability. But if they put us on contract and gave us advances against future royalties instead of salaries, those advances become prepaid assets. I went from being an expense to being an asset!

I asked Ken what sort of advances he was talking about. He threw out

*HAVE TO PLAY

FREDDY PHARKAS: FRONTIER PHARMACIST



ORIGINALLY INTENDED TO be the first in a complete series of parody-based adventure games, *Freddy Pharkas: Frontier Pharmacist* shines as one of Al Lowe's greatest games. Though one would typically expect a game intended as a parody to lean more heavily on its humour than its gameplay, *Freddy Pharkas* is a near-perfect merger of wild, zany comedy and inventive adventure gaming. While the game is obviously meant to keep you laughing from beginning to end, it never feels as though any other aspect of the game is sacrificed or overlooked because of it. In terms of actual plot and gameplay, the player is expected to guide Freddy through a series of puzzles and dilemmas – such as a snail stampede – in order to stop the hostile takeover of the town of Coarsegold, California. Many of these problems are dealt with through clever use of Freddy's pharmaceutical skills, a nice touch that goes a long way to keep it unique.

LEISURE SUIT LARRY IN THE LAND OF THE LOUNGE LIZARDS



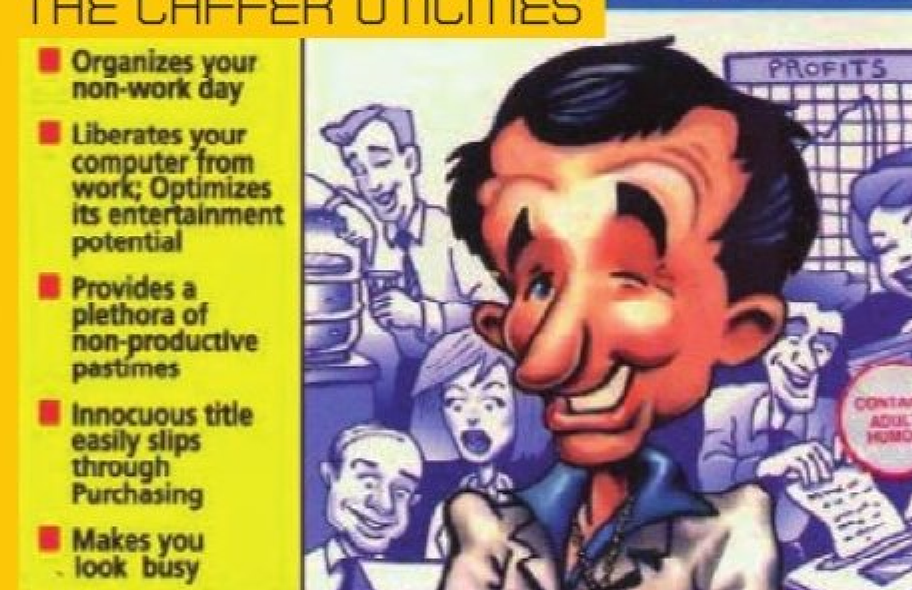
NO LIST OF Al Lowe essentials could be complete without the inclusion of *Leisure Suit Larry In The Land Of The Lounge Lizards*. Inspired in a somewhat roundabout way by Chuck Benton's *Softporn Adventure*, *Leisure Suit Larry*'s plot centred around Larry Laffer's quest to engage in intercourse with a human being of the opposite sex, which can only be accomplished by progressing through the game's typically object-based puzzles. Given the time period, it may not be entirely surprising that concerns over the subject matter led to a sleepy start in terms of sales. With time, however, its solid gameplay and humour secured its place in gaming history.

POLICE QUEST: IN PURSUIT OF THE DEATH ANGEL



THOUGH IT MAY not have been designed by Al Lowe, *Police Quest: In Pursuit Of The Death Angel* bears his mark. It's known for its punishing difficulty level, but unlike many lesser games in the genre, forethought and careful planning can do much to avoid the endless ways to die. *Police Quest* is also interesting due to its heavy adherence to actual police guidelines. In fact, following mundane details such as ensuring that a traffic offender signs their ticket are essential in order to receive full points upon completion. While this may be an annoyance for those looking for a more casual experience, this sort of detail makes *Police Quest* a break from the ordinary.

THE LAFFER UTILITIES



THOUGH IT MAY not be a true game, *The Laffer Utilities* is one piece of software that deserves a look. Originally advertised as office software for everything done at the office that in no way pertains to actual work, *The Laffer Utilities* offers a plethora of neat little applications to make your day just a little brighter. These applications range from basic utilities, such as a joke database and magic 8-ball clone all the way up to actually useful software, such as a utility that will help you decide where to eat lunch. It hosts a number of legitimate work-related applications as well, but even these still come laced with typical Al Lowe humour, making them worth checking out.

TORIN'S PASSAGE



AT A GLANCE, *Torin's Passage* seems like a step back for Al, a move to more traditional adventure gaming. With nothing more than a brief overview of the plot, the story seems like traditional fantasy fare. The plot centres around Torin, a boy as average as a boy can be. That is, of course, until an evil sorceress kidnaps his parents, placing them under her wicked spell and holding them captive in a frightening land, forcing young Torin into a heroic quest to save them. It all seems pretty run of the mill, until you actually start playing the game. *Torin's Passage* is funny, interesting and well designed. In the end, it turns out to be exactly what it claims to be: a fun game that anyone can enjoy.

some numbers. I added things up, and said, 'What about this product? Do you want me to translate this to the Commodore 64?' He said yes. 'Do you want me to do an Atari version of this product?' Yes. Adding it all up, I calculated I would make at least double what I had made as a salaried employee. I asked Ken, 'Have I just been fired?' He said, 'Yeah.' And I said, happily, 'Thanks a lot!'

Two other programmers and I went home and brought back games on time. The other 23 went home and, oh, I don't know, watched soap operas and smoked dope, I guess. I don't know what they did, but they didn't come back with products. So the change was good for me but bad for them. That was also bad for the company: several games due to ship didn't because the programmers weren't self-disciplined enough to complete them.

RG: Looking back on it now, do you think the switch to independent contracting allowed you more freedom in what you created?

AL: Not so much, no. In those early years, Ken was searching for anything that was publishable. Any professional product sold like crazy; there just weren't enough people programming. It's the opposite of the situation today. Now people are coding everywhere; Flash games are created left and right. If you go look at the iTunes Store, there are hundreds of thousands of apps. Of course, most of them are crap because the barrier to entry is so low. Back then, games were cheap to develop; the difficulty was finding people with the skills to create them or the propensity to learn.

RG: On the topic of entering new fields and learning new skills, in the past you have made it fairly clear that prior to *Leisure Suit Larry* you had never really tried your hand at any sort of comedy writing. Basing the entire game around comedy is a pretty major step, in that case. What inspired you to make that kind of shift?

AL: It was my first attempt. Ken and I were discussing my next project when the idea came up. Back then, designers didn't submit elaborate designs. There were no greenlight committees or market research. Ken and I went to lunch, he asked what I wanted to do next, and I didn't care. He remembered that [*Softporn Adventure*] had been a big seller five years earlier. 'Maybe you could update it using our new interpreter. Bring it up to date and maybe it would sell again.'



» [Apple II] *Dragon's Keep* was the first game Al ever programmed, created entirely in Applesoft BASIC.

> "I was saddened to see the end of adventure games. They got me interested in games"

I promised to look it over. I still had a copy at home that I had pirated some years earlier. The game was very crude, even by 1986 standards. I found it laughable. I didn't see it had any chance as a serious game. When I reported back to Ken, I said, 'That game is so out of date it should be wearing a leisure suit.' He laughed. I said I might be able to do something with it if I could mock it and make fun of it. Ken said to give it a try. At the time, the company was short of cash. He suggested that if I did it on speculation, he'd give me a much higher royalty. It was a risk-free investment for him. Since I had money coming in from royalties on other games, I agreed.



So I worked on the game for about three months, I think. When it shipped it was the worst selling product in the history of the company because all the sales people were scared of it, because it was dirty, it was nasty, they weren't sure if anyone would buy it. So it was a self-fulfilling prophecy of defeat. But a funny thing happened: after it shipped, I saw the sales and initial orders and it was just very discouraging. I thought I had just pissed away three months of my life, but Sierra came to me and said the *Police Quest* programmer was having real trouble and asked if I could help bail out *Police Quest*. I said sure, I'd take a look at it, so I jumped right into working with Jim Walls on the first *Police Quest* game and basically rewrote much of the text and added to the design Jim had already. Jim basically had a story but really didn't have any alternative information, so if you didn't already know what to do next there was no way the game could tell you. So Jim and I spent a lot of time going through the game and went, 'What do you do next, Jim? How would you know that?' I can't tell you how many times that phrase came up in the three months I worked there. So we fleshed out the design and gave people a chance of being able to beat the product and finish the game.

In that time, *Larry* just started to sell itself by word of mouth. People played it and liked it, stores learned that the game wasn't that dirty, that it was safe to sell, and that it was a funny game. Sales every month just doubled; it did that for a year. 13 months after it came out it showed up on the top ten and went up through the top ten. I don't know if it ever went to number one but it was in the top five for quite a while. Today games don't have a chance to earn a place like that; there just isn't the shelf life. If they don't sell in the first month people just put it in the discount bin and move to something new.

RG: The humour in the game certainly does seem to be what people love most about it. Playing the game, it seems like much of the humour could also be a bit of an inside joke.

AL: Well, there were a lot of inside jokes. Basically, I didn't know how to write a comedy. There were really only one or two games up to that point that had been funny at all. Every time I thought of something that might be funny, I just kind of threw it in. That's really how it worked. We developed those games in an incredibly interactive environment. For example, I would play the game and think of something to add to it. I could exit the game and be back to my editor in a second or two. I could change a line or two of code, it would only take a second or two to compile it, and I'd be back to that scene in the game. It was an incredibly interactive round-trip experience. There was no waiting for a build, or compiling giant stacks of code or going out for coffee while you were waiting for the machine to compile code. So that's the way I wrote: I looked at what Mark Crowe had drawn for the scene and I'd realise someone is going to say, 'Hey, look at that,' so I'd add a 'look at that' message; or someone is going to try to pick that up, so I'd better add a 'pick that up' message.

Whenever I could, I tried to make those messages funny.

Plus we just tried to think of funny things we could do. For instance, there was a flasher in one scene outside the casino and Mark, when he drew it, drew it as two midgets standing on one another's shoulders so that when they opened the trench coat you could see the outline of these two guys, one on the other's shoulders. Anything we could think of – he drew a dog that just sort of walked across the screen and I thought, 'What can I do with that?' I wound up creating a timer that would count the frames since the last time you moved, and if the timer hit frame 254 I had him come out and head towards you, then the animation of him peeing, I think I did that myself. I think I just got in the editor and added some yellow dots.

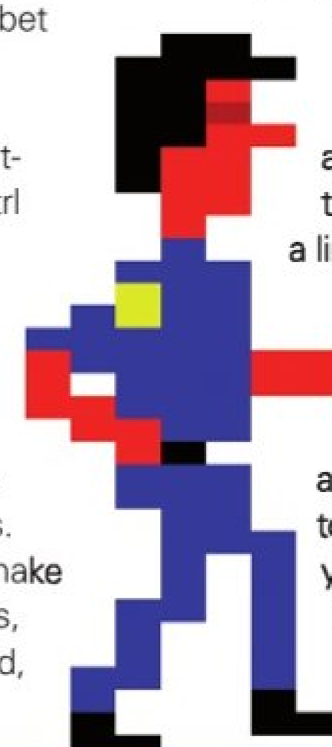
I think the biggest thing that made *Larry* funny and successful was that it was the first game we ever beta tested. I created a routine that stored to floppy disk anything that someone typed in that wasn't recognised by the game. We always had that message that said, 'You can't do that here. At least not now,' which basically meant: 'I have no idea what the hell you're typing.' Any time that message came up I stored what they typed, where they were, what inventory they had and other variables. I took all those inputs and sorted them all by scene number and put almost all of the stuff into the game. I added a message for anything they had tried to do.

RG: Similar to beta testing, you've mentioned in the past that many development tools taken for granted in later years did not exist during this period and had to be created. Were there any tools you created during this period that you are still especially proud of?

AL: Well, the most amazing tool was the one we used when we started using voices for the CD-ROM games. One of the system programmers, Bill Crow, came up with a program that interfaced a laptop computer through the serial port with a DAT recorder of a specific make and model that was pretty common in the studios. By doing that he created a little database on a floppy disk that stored all the recording takes in the recording studio. When we took it into the recording studio for the first time they were amazed. This was down in Hollywood, where they do voiceover work every day. We took this thing and I told them how it worked and that we could ship the DAT tapes and the floppy disks back to Bellevue and, in a few hours, the lines would be ripped out and working. They couldn't believe it! As far as I know, that tool was never replicated. It lasted for six or seven years at Sierra and then everyone went back to doing it the old way.

RG: Beyond these sorts of technological achievements involved in getting your early games out, the writing itself couldn't have been an easy task…

AL: Well, when I designed a game I would basically get in a word processor – back then it was a DOS-based programmer's editor. I used a program called Brief for many years. It was a wonderful program; so long as you used it every day you could fly. It had a lot of commands. For example, I had every alphabet and numeral character on the keyboard defined as a Ctrl-key combination, an Alt-key combination, a Shift-Ctrl combination and an Alt-Shift-Ctrl combination. The function keys were also programmed four different ways, the numeric keypad keys were defined four different ways. Using this editor, I would make long lists of things. Designs, the plot, animations needed, sound effects, music, characters, objects, scenes, anything. Then I would go back and flesh those out a little at a time. A lot of it was done by working side by side with an artist. We would discuss what a scene would be and how it should look. He would go and do a pencil drawing and then he would refine it and we would just go over these things back and forth. It was a very interactive process. Months later, it would be done.



Each individual piece took a day or something to create. You couldn't do a scene very quickly when everything in the scene needed to be drawn as a line-based vector or fill. I'm not sure if people are familiar with Illustrator but it was an Illustrator-type program. You drew a line of a particular colour – say you wanted to draw a tree: you would draw a line that touched the ground, then draw a line of the trunk until you finally had a fully enclosed object, and then you would use the fill tool. If you had a pixel missing somewhere, the fill would leak and fill the screen and you'd have to go back and figure out where you had the hole. All the scenes in those games were painstaking to draw; that's why we did a lot of pencil drawings first and then refined those. Often I would have the pencil sketches in the game and you would play the game and see black and white drawings on the screen that would eventually be replaced by a full-colour picture.

> "Mark drew the flasher as two midgets standing on one another's shoulders"

RG: While we're discussing graphics, by the time *Larry 5* rolled around the game had shifted from a text-based interface to a new fully icon-driven graphic interface. Looking back on it, how do you feel about that shift?

AL: It was certainly different, wasn't it? It was a big change; we thought that with the start of the Macintosh and after seeing the first Windows products that had icons. In fact, at about the same time as Windows 1.0, Sierra had published a home word processor called Home Word



*NUMBER CRUNCHING

There are **44** objects described in *Leisure Suit Larry 5*'s original design document

Over **250,000** copies of *Leisure Suit Larry* were sold by 1 January 1988

Throughout the Eighties, Al averaged **2.25** releases per year

There are **44** possible mistakes that can lead to death in *Freddy Pharkas: Frontier Pharmacist*

At no point in the original *Leisure Suit Larry* can you carry more than **$250**

'Al Lowe' returns **221,000** Google hits

Al's first game, graphics and all, is only **42kb**

The entirety of the original *Leisure Suit Larry* series contains exactly **85** songs

There were over **35** rejected titles for *Leisure Suit Larry 7*

The composer for *Torin's Passage*, Michel Legrand, has won **3** Academy Awards

and Home Filer that used icons. We just thought that was the future. What we didn't realise was that a big part of the difficulty of the games was in people trying to figure out what to type or how to type it, so the first game was quite a bit easier than the previous games. I know when *Police Quest*, *King's Quest* and *Space Quest*, *Larry*… all of us when we made the move to the icons the games got a lot easier. What we did to counteract that in the next game was to add more puzzles and raise the difficulty again. I don't think any of us realised how much trouble people had typing stuff in.

RG: In the past you've implied that during the period when you would have been working on *Larry 4*, you instead wound up working on an unreleased online multiplayer adventure game. Can you shed any light on the form of design and gameplay at all?

AL: No, because when I started on the project we weren't anywhere close to having the interpreter and the environment ready to do online multiplayer games. So what we did was take little baby steps – the guy who was working on the low-level modem-based code, the guy who was working on the interpreter and I got in a room, and I started creating the game itself and the other guys worked on the low-level stuff. We started by coding checkers – when we could send that this piece moved from this square to that square and have that happen on the other guy's computer… well then we had really accomplished something. That's how we started: sending messages that this piece had moved there. We tried to keep the messages as short as possible because the bandwidth was so miserably slow. You think of a 56k modem today; that was what? 40 times faster? We were at 1k of speed. God knows, who still has dial-up?

That's how we started. I coded that game while we were trying to get this to work. After that, I did a backgammon game and a chess game, so we were doing board-based games. At some point we decided we've got to invent the waiting room and avatars, so I made a tool called Facemaker that allowed you to change eyes, eyebrows, mouths, noses and all that stuff. All this was the first time anyone had done this sort of thing. We didn't know what we were doing; we just thought, 'How is anyone going to recognise one another?' We needed to have some kind of representation of who you were. As far as I know, according to the US Patent Office we got a patent for inventing the online avatar, which is now owned by AOL, of all people. I don't think they even know they own it. I suppose that, theoretically, they could go to all the online games and collect some kind of royalty for using that patented idea.

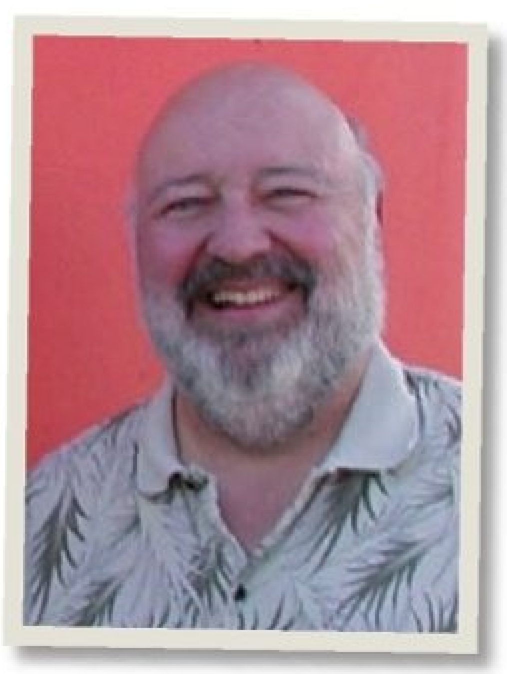
Anyway, I spent about a year working on creating all these other things, waiting for the system to actually get good enough that we could display multiple characters and do an adventure-type game. After a year, I thought it would be about another four years until we got to that point. Instead it was about seven or eight years. By that time Sierra had sold the technology to AT&T, who sold it to AOL, and AOL put it in a cabinet somewhere and forgot about it.

RG: Shortly after your work in online gaming, you worked on another piece of unusual software: *The Laffer Utilities*. What was the inspiration behind that strange mix of applications?

AL: It's interesting. There was a guy who coded on *Larry 3* named Carlos Escobar. He was a crack-up, a funny guy. He had so many sayings that one of the guys at the company created a TSR program of his 'lines'. Remember those? Terminate and Stay Resident programs? They were a start-up program that you put in your autoexec file so it ran when you booted up your computer. This program merely brought up a saying from Carlos. I thought it a great idea that he had catalogued all these funny things Carlos had said so you'd read one message each time you restarted your computer. So that Carlos program was my inspiration. I thought people were advanced enough that there would be a market for a collection of little similar programs. I was also a fan of Norton Utilities. In fact, I think that was part of the problem with that product, that I named it *The Laffer Utilities*. Once it shipped, we realised that people didn't know Larry's last name was Laffer, so we should have called it *The Leisure Suit Larry Utilities*! Instead we called it *The Laffer Utilities* as a spoof on Norton Utilities. The joke was on us!



» [PC] Later adventures brought icon-based interfaces and a hike in difficulty to compensate.



RG: After *The Laffer Utilities* came out, you continued to work on titles very different from those in the *Larry* series, such as *Freddy Pharkas*. Did you

have any trouble convincing Sierra to try something new?

AL: No, actually Ken and I were big fans of the guys who did movies like *Airplane!*, movies spoofing other genres. So what I pitched to Ken was to let me do spoofs of various movie genres. We started off with Westerns because, simply, there hadn't been a Western game in years and I thought it would be easy because Westerns were still popular TV shows. Actually, I was pleased when *Red Dead Redemption* came out because I thought, 'If only I could have done something like this I could have done so many funny things!'

So, the idea was that we'd do a *Larry* every other year and between them I would do a spoof of a movie genre, so I did the Western and the next one was going to be a children's game, *Torin's Passage*. The next one was to be a spy comedy. I forget what other things we had planned, but there were other spoofs. That's one thing I have to say I really respect about Ken's ability to manage a company and be a publisher: unlike publishers today his goal was to find things that weren't in the marketplace and do those and give people a choice of products they haven't seen before, whereas today the tendency is to only do something that has proven to be successful already, which means you get nothing but copycat games over and over again. Occasionally someone has the guts to try something different, but for the most part I think the creativity has really gone out of the publishing business.

RG: Mentioning *Torin's Passage*, it's interesting: it seems to hearken back to some of your earlier work, being more child-friendly but retaining a bit of edge in its humour, perhaps even a touch of the *Larry*-style humour.

AL: Well, not *Larry*-style so much, but humour. What I tried to do was make a game where a parent could play with a child and both of them would laugh, only at different times.

to develop, suddenly you didn't want to make a lot of mistakes. Ken's investment in the first *Leisure Suit Larry* game was basically nothing. You could afford to make mistakes; you could take chances and try new things, but when a game costs $50

> "I wrote a few things in BASIC to help me do my job. I made a sellable product"



RG: Over the course of your career, the industry has changed a great deal. How did you feel about these changes?

AL: I was saddened to see the end of adventure games; it was the kind of game that got me interested in computer games. It was the genre I enjoyed playing the most and it was the genre in which I had my success. Obviously to see it tossed aside, discarded like yesterday's newspaper, that was tough. I don't know that it was as tough on me as it was on Ken and Roberta. I mean, Ken and Roberta started that business on their kitchen table. It grew to be a billion dollar market capitalisation company by the time it was [bought] from them, so for them to watch the company go into this death spiral until it crashed into the earth was really disappointing. The people who took the company private from being a publicly traded company are now in prison for fraud. If your readers Google 'Walter Forbes Cendant CUC trial', you can read about what happened. It's a really sad tale.

RG: As you moved forward in your career, did you ever feel that the advancement in tools and technology reduced the sense of community in game development as reliance on one another to develop and share tools lessened?

AL: I don't know if it was the technology so much as the money. When games got over a million dollars million like you hear flipped about today, you damn well better not put out too many games that aren't hits or you're going to go under. I think that's why you see these games designed by committee and games where market research plays a big role in what happens and games where there are endless meetings about what should happen here and there. The more cooks there are in the kitchen, the more you're going to wind up with a bland goulash.

Back in the day we created one-person games; now in later years we had lots of people working for us, but basically all the games I made for Sierra were Al Lowe games. It had not only my name on the box but my stamp, my personality, my sense of humour, my sensibilities, all that stuff. Likewise the *Space Quest* games were Scott Murphy and Mark Crowe, *Police Quest* was Jim Walls, and certainly the *King's Quest* games were Roberta Williams. When you have one person who makes every major decision, you wind up with a game that has a real focus to it, that has a viewpoint. You may not like that viewpoint, but at least it has a definite viewpoint. I think too many games are designed by committees and are therefore less interesting, bland and lowest common denominator products.



RG: After retirement you worked on a game called *Sam Suede: Undercover Exposure*. What was it about the project that managed to draw you out of retirement?

AL: Well, it was a chance to do exactly what I just said. The only thing that made me do the game, that made me feel I had to do it, was that they gave me complete control. They said they would do the game I wanted to do, that I would have complete control of it, that it would be an Al Lowe game. That was the key ingredient that made me sit up and take notice and go back to work every day.

It was a damn shame that our timing was off. We were a little late for the Xbox and PlayStation 2 market and too early for the Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3 market. We ended up straddling the gap and in the middle of the project we changed from a low-res, kind of simple graphics game to a much more realistic, high-res graphics sort of game. We thought it would cost us two or three times more to create but instead it cost us about ten times the money to create. We ran out of money and we couldn't get any more from any publisher; they weren't willing to take a risk on an action comedy. So we shut the doors and sent everyone home.

RG: According to several gaming sites, *Sam Suede: Undercover Exposure* was actually picked up by a new studio. Several sources reported that you weren't even made aware of the game changing hands. Is that true?

AL: Yeah, I still haven't heard anything from the studio that picked it up or the people who claim to be working on it or anyone else. All I know is that I've read the same stories that you've read, but it's funny: since that one day the story came out I haven't heard another word about it. I don't even know if the game is still being developed. If it is, I wonder what kind of game it could be at this point because I had an elaborate design document for the project, but the way I work the comedy comes in when I write the dialogue, and that was maybe one per cent done when I left. I don't know how they're going to do an action comedy unless they find someone else to write the comedy.

RG: If the game ever does come out, will you be picking up a copy?

AL: Well, you know I got stung on those *Leisure Suit Larry* games pretty badly, so I probably won't drop 30 bucks on it!



» [Apple II] We've spent enough time online to be afraid of trolls too.



» [DOS] *Donald Duck's Playground* was one of several Disney tie-ins from Sierra.



» [DOS] Strange to think that the creator of *Leisure Suit Larry* designed *Winnie The Pooh In The Hundred Acre Wood.*

YOU ASK THE QUESTIONS

In addition to our interview, Al was kind enough to answer some of your questions from the forum

merman: The *Police Quest* series made use of technical consultants – former policeman Jim Walls and ex-LAPD chief Daryl Gates. How much input did they have into the final games?
AL: Jim Walls had a lot of input; he was the main game designer and wrote much of the text. Gates much less; he was more of an overseer after the fact.

lanky316: When thinking of supporting characters in your games, did a witty name (Madame Ovaree, PH Balance, et al) ever lead to wanting to do more with the character?
AL: Since the development of those games was an iterative process, of course their names affected their dialogue and development. Especially the Juggs sisters!

merman: Do you think touch-screens and motion control would suit your style of game? And which format would you love to produce a new game on?
AL: I long to be able to do a Kinect game; the mind boggles at the possibilities for humour!

HalcyonDaze00: What do you think of the monstrosity that is *Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust*?
AL: www.allowe.com/Larry/BOB.htm

paranoid marvin: Is Larry Laffer based on a real person?



AL: There was a guy who used to entertain the programmers by coming back and telling us about all these conquests while he was on the road travelling. Our reaction was really, 'Just shut up, we don't care. Just go away.' Of course, we were all geeks, so that didn't help either. So, when I was looking for a guy to use as my buffoon, this guy was a natural. So I kind of modelled him, not graphically but in my own mind, after this guy.

paranoid marvin: Does that person know they had a game based on them?
AL: I certainly hope not. At least, I hope he doesn't know where I live.





Spider-Man: The Video Game

SPIDER-MAN & HIS UN-AMAZING FRIENDS

» RETROREVIVAL

» ARCADE
» SEGA
» 1991

Being a huge fan of *Spider-Man* growing up, I would consume any merchandise featuring Marvel's webslinger I could lay my hands on. Hailing from the seaside town of Portsmouth (home of the planet's most painful beach), I used to frequent Southsea arcades quite a bit. I seem to remember that platform games had firmly migrated to games consoles and computers, leaving arcades to be filled with two things: racing games and beat-'em-ups... and it was one of the latter that struck a chord with me, chiefly for featuring Spider-Man in a lead role.

Although it's called *Spider-Man*, and its gameplay sees you take on pretty much all of Spidey's most famous and fearsome adversaries, the game sees him accompanied by three super friends: Black Cat, Sub-Mariner and Hawkeye. Not an official league of heroes, this foursome seemed to be drawn together randomly, and the lesser-billed (and well-known) heroes were simply not as cool or satisfying to play as Spider-Man himself. Sub-Mariner looked like a topless old man, and Hawkeye's feeble arrows might as well have been Black Cat's faux-whiskers for all the good they did.

Like other System 32 games, the game made use of sprite-scaling to help garner attention from passers-by – in this instance, using it at points to pan the camera out and transform the game into a side-scrolling run-and-gun game, which plays a little like *Strider*. Impressive when you see it action, it does a good job of breaking the traditional mould of the beat-'em-up genre. But it isn't without problems.

The game suffers from repetition. There are few enemies in the game, and the boss fights are protracted and repeated affairs. The fight against the game's final boss, Doctor Doom, is hilariously drawn-out; you tussle with him about six times during the last level, and once beaten even then you have to re-face the boss from the first level again – Venom, who then clones himself into about fifty forms. Great.

Still, if you have a soft spot for *Spider-Man*, it certainly has more fan service to keep you interested than most tie-in arcade titles.


VOK!
PUSH BUTTON
PUSH BUTTON

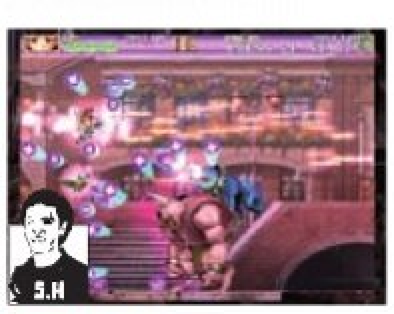


>> There's something of a shooter theme this month thanks to the long overdue release of Deathsmiles, the first bullet hell shooter for Sega's Dreamcast. Oh and we've finally gotten our hands on Marvel Vs Capcom 3. Enjoy

PICKS OF THE MONTH



DARRAN
Fast Striker
A wonderful addition to the Dreamcast library and its best homebrew shooter.



STUART
Deathsmiles
Darran's been recommending this for over a year; it's great to see he wasn't telling porkies.



DAVID
Marvel Vs. Capcom 3: Fate Of Two Worlds
Yes, it's unbalanced in places, but it's also plenty of fun.

Marvel Vs. Capcom 3: Fate Of Two Worlds

WHERE THE HELL IS STRIDER?

INFORMATION

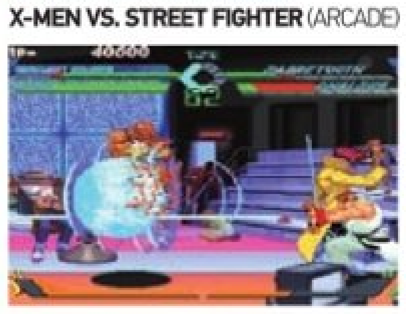
- » **FEATURED SYSTEM:** XBOX 360
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** PS3
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PRICE:** £49.99
- » **PUBLISHER:** CAPCOM
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- » **PLAYERS:** 1-2

BRIEF HISTORY

» The first *Marvel Vs. Capcom* game hit arcades in the summer of 1997. The third part of Capcom's *Vs.* series (after *X-Men Vs. Street Fighter* and *Marvel Super Heroes Vs. Street Fighter*), unlike previous *Vs.* games it opened up the roster by including classic Capcom heroes such as Strider Hiryu, Morrigan and Captain Commando.

WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD
X-MEN VS. STREET FIGHTER (ARCADE)



▼ SOMETHING NEW
MARVEL NEMESIS: RISE OF THE IMPERFECTS (XBOX)



360





It was bound to happen eventually. After wowing us with *Street Fighter IV, Super Street Fighter IV, Marvel Vs. Capcom 2* and the excellent *Tatsunoko Vs. Capcom: Ultimate All-Stars,* we've finally been let down. Of course, you can see by the end score that *Marvel Vs. Capcom 3* is still a great game; it's just not the massive improvement over *MVC2* that we were hoping it to be.

By far our biggest issue is the rather lacklustre final roster, which features just 36 characters, disappointing compared to the 54 brawlers that *Marvel Vs. Capcom 2* offered. Another annoyance is that Capcom has already readily admitted that an additional two characters – Shuma-Gorath and Jill Valentine – will be available as DLC (or free if you pre-ordered), which is more than a little cheeky. Another aspect of the character roster is that it feels rather safe, with none of the bizarreness that its predecessor offered. It's still a fine line-up, and some of the new additions like Nathan Spencer, Mike Haggar and X-23 are wonderful, but it just doesn't feel very epic.

Fortunately, while the roster takes a little while to love, the gameplay is immediately accessible and extremely fun to boot.

» [360] Nathan Spencer works amazingly well in the new line-up. We particularly love his Scorpion-stealing 'Get over here!'

» [360] The in-game backgrounds truly are stunning. It's just a shame that there are so few of them.

» [360] Specials, as you'd expect, are absolutely ridiculous and outrageously over-the-top. We wouldn't have it any other way.









OPINION

I agree with Darran to a point, but I'm a huge fan of the series' over-the-top-ness, and this is no different. Loads of characters, accessible combat, screen-filling craziness and typically unbalanced fighters. Fans won't be disappointed.

Stuart Hunt

Spread across four buttons, you have Light, Medium and Hard attacks, along with a special that launches your hapless opponent skywards for potential air juggles. Button-bashing has been addressed as well, and while simple mashing will get you so far, you're still going to need proper tactics if you aim to reach the epic showdown with the game's world-crushing opponent.

Sadly, while button-mashing has been rectified to a certain degree, a number of new characters undo all of Capcom's hard work by being incredibly cheap to play with. MODOK and Arthur are by far the worst, being able to string out a ridiculous array of projectile attacks that make them no fun to play against. There's always been unbalancing in the *Vs.* games due to the very nature of them featuring so many different opponents, but it feels far more pronounced in *Marvel Vs. Capcom 3*, ever so slightly spoiling the in-game fighting.

Of course, more advanced players will see these new combatants as little more than an annoyance, and Capcom has included a number of handy moves to ensure that you can get the upper hand against all the would-be spammers. This is most notable with a handy ground slam attack that certain characters possess, and the new X-Factor attack, the latter being particularly powerful as it temporarily boosts your speed and power (which can increase based on the number of fighters you have left) and interrupts virtually any attack. It's great for shifting the tables late in the game. Partner swapping is also keenly integrated into the gameplay, again adding to the overall strategy that can be employed.

Visually it's fantastic, improving on the gaudy, cartoony visuals of *Tatsunoko* and delivering ridiculously over-the-top specials, which continually fill the screen in their entire retina-scorching glory. Animation is wonderful, the heroes and villains are instantly recognisable and full of character, while the backgrounds, while limited in scope, are absolutely jam-packed with detail and fan references.

Due to its very nature, *Marvel Vs. Capcom 3: Fate Of Two Worlds* was never going to outdo the polished and finely honed gameplay of *Street Fighter IV*, but it is a hell of a lot of fun.



In a nutshell

It lacks the depth of *Street Fighter IV* and doesn't have the same nutty appeal to us that *Tatsunoko* did, but Capcom has still managed to deliver a thoroughly enjoyable brawler. Highly recommended.

>> Scores

Presentation	90%
Graphics	88%
Sound	82%
Playability	89%
Addictivity	85%
Overall	**87%**

✱VIRTUAL ROUND-UP

>> There's no better medium to find all your favourite retro games than the various download services. Here are this month's new additions...

▼ VIRTUAL CONSOLE

The retro loving at Nintendo continues thanks to another healthy batch of games. With Nintendo recently revealing its plans for the 3DS version of Virtual Console, we're hoping the large number of releases keeps flowing.

Magical Drop III
» **System:** Neo Geo
» **Price:** 900 Points
» **Rating:** ★★★★☆

Exed Exes
» **System:** Arcade
» **Price:** 800 Points
» **Rating:** ★★☆☆☆

Ghosts 'N Goblins
» **System:** Arcade
» **Price:** 800 Points
» **Rating:** ★★★☆☆

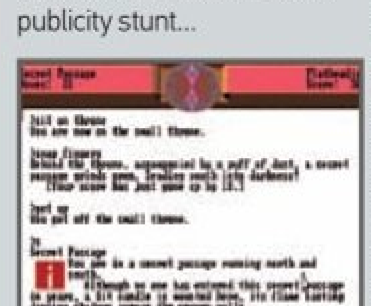
Mario Party 2
» **System:** N64
» **Price:** 1,000 Points
» **Rating:** ★★★★☆

Commando
» **System:** Arcade
» **Price:** 800 Points
» **Rating:** ★★★☆☆

SonSon
» **System:** Arcade
» **Price:** 800 Points
» **Rating:** ★★★☆☆

▼ PC

It's another good month for Good Old Games, as it's just released some cracking Sierra adventures, including the *Police Quest* games and an anthology of *Zork* titles. And to think we nearly gave up on the service after that publicity stunt...



The Zork Anthology
» **Service:** GOG
» **Price:** $5.99
» **Rating:** ★★★★★
» **Now** this is magnificent value for money. This new compilation from GOG gives you the ground-breaking original text adventure *Zork* along with *Zork II, III, Beyond Zork, Zork Zero* and *Planetfall*. Basically you'll be playing these forever.

Police Quest 1+2+3+4
» **Service:** GOG
» **Price:** $9.99
» **Rating:** ★★★★☆

Alien Shooter 2: Reloaded
» **Service:** GOG
» **Price:** $5.99
» **Rating:** ★★★☆☆

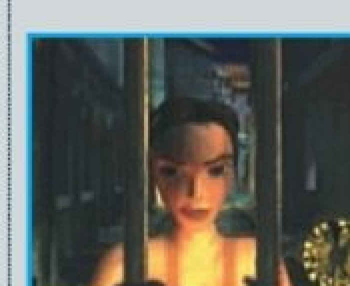
Moto Racer 3
» **Service:** GOG
» **Price:** $9.99
» **Rating:** ★★★☆☆

Dream Pinball 3D
» **Service:** GOG
» **Price:** $5.99
» **Rating:** ★★★☆☆

The Last Express: Collector's Edition
» **Service:** DotEmu
» **Price:** $9.99
» **Rating:** ★★★★☆

▼ PLAYSTATION NETWORK

After showing so much promise over Christmas, PSN heads back to the doldrums, with a single game, and not a particularly good one at that. Here's hoping we get some more choice next month and some new Neo Geo offerings.



Tomb Raider Chronicles
» **System:** PSone
» **Price:** £7.99
» **Rating:** ★★★☆☆
» **Okay,** we're a little harsh, as *Chronicles* is actually a fairly decent game. It just felt like a step back at the time due to its clunky controls and uninspiring gameplay. The price is a little high considering how cheaply it can be picked up in physical form, so you still may want to give this a miss.

▼ GAME ROOM

We're starting to get concerned now. The last pack Krome was rumoured to be working on is now out, *Sunset Riders* is still nowhere to be seen and Microsoft is keeping incredibly quiet about the future of the service. Is this the end for the greatly underperforming service, or will Microsoft announce a new developer?

Code Breaker
» **System:** Atari 2600
» **Rating:** ★★☆☆☆

Desert Falcon
» **System:** Atari 2600
» **Rating:** ★★☆☆☆

Devastators
» **System:** Arcade
» **Rating:** ★★★☆☆

Football
» **System:** Atari 2600
» **Rating:** ★☆☆☆☆

Iron Horse
» **System:** Arcade
» **Rating:** ★★☆☆☆

RealSports Baseball
» **System:** Atari 2600
» **Rating:** ★☆☆☆☆

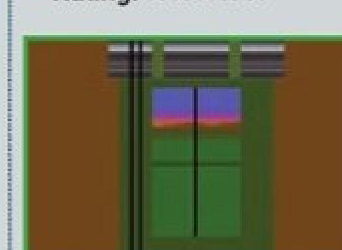
Slam Dunk Basketball
» **System:** Intellivision
» **Rating:** ★☆☆☆☆

Star Ship
» **System:** Atari 2600
» **Rating:** ★★☆☆☆

Surround
» **System:** Atari 2600
» **Rating:** ★☆☆☆☆

Tennis
» **System:** Intellivision
» **Price:**
» **Rating:** ★☆☆☆☆

The Main Event
» **System:** Arcade
» **Rating:** ★★★☆☆



Venetian Blinds
» **System:** Atari 2600
» **Rating:** ☆☆☆☆☆
» **Now** this is just extracting the urine. *Venetian Blinds* is nothing more than a tech demo – you open and close a set of blinds – and yet Microsoft and Krome are expecting people to spend money on this? Utterly despicable, and an insult to retro gamers everywhere.

Pokémon Black & White

HOW DO YOU GET 50 PIKACHUS ON A BUS? POKÉMON!

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** NINTENDO DS » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A » **RELEASED:** MARCH 2011
» **PRICE:** £34.99 » **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO » **DEVELOPER:** GAME FREAK » **PLAYERS:** 1-2

NDS







Considering its proximity to the release of the 3DS, we're somewhat amazed that *Pokémon Black* & *White* aren't launch titles for it. Having said that, even though it lacks 3D sparkle, this is arguably the most impressive addition to the franchise since the series began.

Indeed, everything about *Black* and *White* reeks of 'bigger, faster, better, more', and returning developer Game Freak has thrown a huge number of different and diverse gameplay mechanics into its *Pokémon* pie with impressive results – and let's not forget that there are now a staggering 649 Pokémon to collect.

First off, it looks absolutely lovely, with charmingly drawn characters, and a massively overhauled world featuring some amazing city sections that would have looked stunning in 3D. It also has newly animated Pokémon battles. Gorgeously animated and awash with snazzy effects, the new visual look improves the series' trademark battles massively, giving them a real weight and excitement as you lead your six chosen Pokémon to victory.



» [DS] Before you start your adventure you'll need to choose from one of three Pokémon.

The two new main additions to the battle mechanics are Triple Battles and Rotation Battles. The former has you fighting with three Pokémon at a time, while the latter enables you to switch between three Pokémon without giving up your turn. Both new inclusions add greatly to the game's overall battle strategies, and ensure that grinding through the adventure never becomes a soulless chore.

Add in massively improved online modes, a compatibility tester between players, a new Battle mode and the chance to take part in Pokémon Contents, and *Black* and *White* prove themselves to be more than worthy updates to the long-running series.

OPINION



Yes, they've been graphically updated, and yes, they feature a huge number of Pokémon and new battle mechanics, but *Pokémon Black* and *White* still have that nasty whiff of déjà vu about them. A solid enough continuation, but personally I'd like more new mechanics.

Stuart Hunt

>> Scores

Presentation	88%
Graphics	90%
Sound	70%
Playability	88%
Addictivity	87%

Overall 88%

NDS





Mario Vs. Donkey Kong: Mini-Land Mayhem

NINTENDO'S QUIRKY FRANCHISE KEEPS ON CHANGING

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** NINTENDO DS » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** NA » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
» **PRICE:** £29.99 » **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE » **PLAYERS:** 1



One thing we like about the *Mario Vs. Donkey Kong* series is how Nintendo constantly changes the mechanics for each new release. While the basic premise – get your wind-up toys to the exit in one piece – remains pretty much the same, there are always new mechanics in place to help make the core gameplay feel fresh and exciting.

Unlike previous versions of *MVDK*, you no longer have any direct control over the minis you must protect. Once wound up, the tiny Marios will keep moving in a single direction, relentlessly moving forward until something hits them and elicits a change in direction or they reach the exit. As a result, *Mini-Land Mayhem* focuses on manipulating your environment as much as possible, constantly building and deconstructing bridges, girders and other items as you guide the toys to the onscreen exit. Things become further complicated



» [DS] Riffing on the original arcade game, you need to avoid barrels and punish Donkey Kong.

by the fact that you only have a set number slots for each item, meaning a fair amount of strategy is required to ensure that you can always lay a walkway in the correct place.

Playing like a cross between *Lemmings* and *The Humans*, *Mini-Land Mayhem* is an interesting evolution of the series, but doesn't feel as tight as past games due to its overall level design and general lack of inventiveness. It's an interesting idea, but we long for an update of the original GBA game.

OPINION



I've been really enjoying this. The addition of the construction zone adds greatly to the longevity, while the new gameplay mechanics help the series feel fresh to play. The level design lacks the polish we'd expect, but this is still fun stuff.

Darran Jones

>> Scores

Presentation	75%
Graphics	80%
Sound	68%
Playability	79%
Addictivity	70%

Overall 74%

Tactics Ogre: Let Us Cling Together

A CLASSIC SRPG SOME 16 YEARS IN THE MAKING

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** PSP » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
» **PRICE:** £34.99 » **PUBLISHER:** SQUARE ENIX » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE » **PLAYERS:** 1



Despite being one of the finest examples of the genre, the *Tactics Ogre* franchise rarely gets an airing in the UK. So, thank goodness that Square Enix has finally decided to give the strategy RPG a long-overdue English update, and on the PSP no less.

Similar in style to Square Enix's very own *Final Fantasy Tactics*, *Tactics Ogre* has you taking part in a series of lengthy turn-based battles, as your characters attempt to reunite the war-torn world they live in. As with *Final Fantasy Tactics*, there are a huge amount of different skills, character classes and items to learn, but they are all carefully introduced to the player, never overwhelming you with lists of confusing stats and figures.

That's not to say *Tactics Ogre* is an easy ride, though, because this is a surprisingly tough game in places. It's never unfairly difficult, but you'll often feel the need to return to past battlefields and replay fights in order to raise the levels of your heroes. If this feels too much of a grindsome chore, however, you can simply make use of the new Chariot Tarot, a handy device that enables you to rewind time to any point in a current battle.

Levelling is also handled differently, as you now level-up classes instead of individual characters (handy for when new characters join your party) while other amendments to item creation and the battle system arguably improve on the mechanics that the series has introduced over the last 16 years.

>> Scores

Presentation	82%
Graphics	86%
Sound	90%
Playability	90%
Addictivity	91%

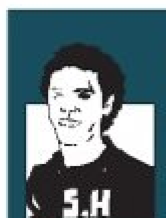
Overall 90%



» [PSP] Considering the toughness of *Let Us Cling Together*, being able to replay past moves is very, very useful.



OPINION



Having never played the original much (due to the baffling language barrier) it's rather nice to finally see what all the fuss is about. It's certainly a tough SRPG, but the varied play mechanics and tactical battles make this a definite keeper. Highly recommended.

Stuart Hunt



Bionic Commando Rearmed 2

» **SYSTEM:** PSN
» **PRICE:** £11.99 » **PLAYERS:** 1-2

>> How disappointing. Developers Fat Shark take the *Bionic Commando* licence from GRIN and fails to deliver the same classic gameplay. The new jump mechanic is too floaty, the swing physics horribly erratic, and slowdown sometimes appears, making certain sections needlessly difficult. It does pick up somewhat on later stages, but it lacks the enjoyment of Grin's offering.

>> Score **60%**



Ascendancy

» **SYSTEM:** IPAD, IPHONE
» **PRICE:** £4.99 » **PLAYERS:** 1

>> Fans of the 1995 DOS game will be pleased to hear that it has been replicated perfectly on iOS by original developers The Logic Factory. An absorbing strategy game that sees you managing resources as you take control of one of 21 different alien races and try to dominate the solar system, this is a sensational port that's only really let down by its cumbersome and difficult-to-read tutorials.

>> Score **80%**

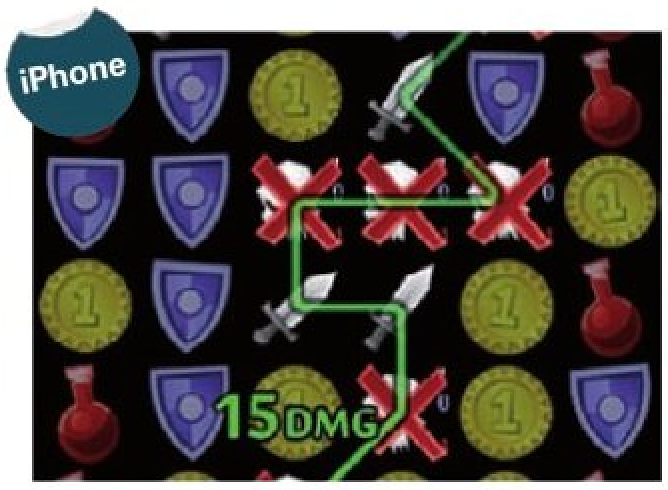


X-Men Arcade

» **SYSTEM:** PS3
» **PRICE:** £6.29 » **PLAYERS:** 1-6

>> While *X-Men Arcade* is still a lot of fun to play with friends, it can be a dreadful grind on your own, due to the general lack of variety and lack of interesting moves. Drop-in-and-out online multiplayer goes a long way towards solving this, and the ability to switch between different versions of the game is a nice addition, but we were still somewhat disappointed with the final result.

>> Score **68%**



Dungeon Raid

» **SYSTEM:** IPHONE
» **PRICE:** £1.79 » **PLAYERS:** 1

>> Like *Puzzle Quest*, *Dungeon Raid* is an RPG take on the popular 'match three' genre. A number of skulls appear on each screen and you must link together chains of items in order to defeat them. Defeating skulls earns experience, which in turn earns you numerous upgrades, and the whole game has a pleasing roguelike feel to it. An extremely addictive and interesting take on a well-worn genre.

>> Score **84%**

>> DEATHSMILES



» [Xbox 360] Bosses feature intricate bullet patterns to negotiate. The harder the difficulty, the tougher the pattern.



CAVE PROVES IT DOESN'T TAKE THINGS LYING DOWN

Deathsmiles



Well, this feels rather strange. It's been nearly two years since we first played *Deathsmiles* on Xbox 360 (its Japan release was all the way back in April 2009), making this review rather tricky, especially as we've been playing the sequel for nearly a year now as well.

Whatever the reason for the lengthy delay, at least it's finally happened, and the end result is that the vast majority of Western gamers will now be able to play one of Cave's best efforts, and easily the best horizontal scrolling shooter since Treasure's *Gradius V*.

What's interesting about *Deathsmiles* is that, while it features a typically convoluted scoring system, it's far more accessible than a great many of the developer's other games. This in part could be contributed to its fantastic presentation, its super-cute female protagonists and the fact that it looks absolutely gorgeous. Indeed, play the Xbox 360 version of *Deathsmiles* and you'll be treated to some simply beautiful sprite design that makes a great number of other shooter games look positively dull and soulless in comparison.

INFORMATION

- **FEATURED SYSTEM:** XBOX 360
- **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** NA
- **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- **PRICE:** £29.99
- **PUBLISHER:** RISING STAR GAMES
- **DEVELOPER:** CAVE
- **PLAYERS:** 1-2

BRIEF HISTORY

» *Deathsmiles* was originally released in arcades in October 2007 with an updated version, *Mega Black Label*, (included on this disc) released a year later. Its sequel, which uses polygons instead of sprites, was released in 2010.

While *Deathsmiles* is a lot more accessible than other Cave shooters (providing you're not playing the more manic versions of the game that have been included), it nevertheless retains a deep scoring system. Destroyed enemies drop pick-ups, which contribute to a counter at the bottom of the screen. If high-value pick-ups hit the ground, you'll be given less points for them once collected. Upon your counter hitting 1,000, enemies will start producing the best possible drops. The difference here, though, is that you now get rated on pick-ups, meaning you need to let them shatter as often as possible to get the best multipliers. It's a clever twist that allows for some insane high scores.

The cleverness continues thanks to the tight enemy waves and the bosses that await you at the end of each stage. While a few are conventional – a fire-breathing dragon here, an ent-like tree monster there – some of them are absolutely bonkers, thanks to Cave seamlessly blending a Halloween theme to traditional fantasy. Add in some truly intricate bullet patterns, especially on some of the more difficult levels, and *Deathsmiles* proves itself to be an incredibly hectic shooter that eases you in gently but refuses to let you go.

OPINION



With its pastel colours, over-the-top bosses and fantasy setting, *Deathsmiles* is a typical Cave shooter. Far more accessible than past games in its catalogue, it's a superb game that comes stuffed with some brilliant extras. Highly recommended.

Stuart Hunt

★ GO DEEPER

The facts behind Deathsmiles

>> The deluxe edition features the 1,200-point additional DLC that was only available in Japan and a CD soundtrack, which was released separately in Japan.

>> It's a little slower than the Japanese port, but the PAL game is far better than the US version.

★WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD
COTTON 2 (ARCADE)



▽ SOMETHING NEW
DEATHSMILES 2 (ARCADE)



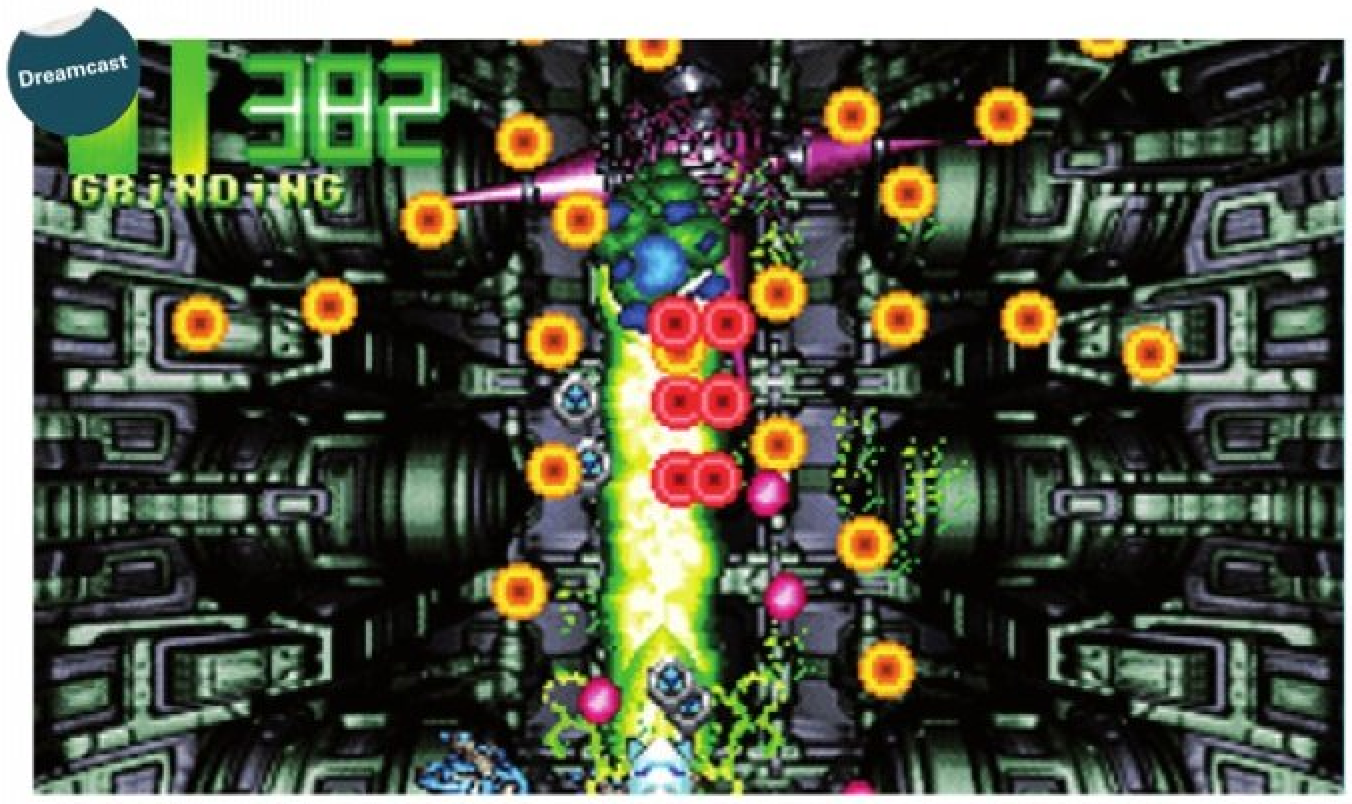
In a Nutshell

Yes, the sequel is already out in Japan, but *Deathsmiles* remains an insanely good example of the genre that should appeal to even casual gamers.

>> Scores

Presentation	90%
Graphics	96%
Sound	90%
Playability	95%
Addictivity	94%

Overall 94%





» [Dreamcast] Bullet patterns aren't as intricate as Cave's, but they're still tough.



OPINION

I wasn't too impressed with *Last Hope*, so I wasn't too keen on playing this. I needn't have worried though; *Fast Striker* is a fast-paced shooter with clever mechanics and a solid scoring system. It's region free as well, so anyone can play it.

Stuart Hunt

Fast Striker

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** DREAMCAST » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** NEO GEO MVS » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW » **PRICE:** 32,95EUR (LIMITED EDITION 45,95EUR) » **PUBLISHER:** NG:DEV.TEAM » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE »



Despite a number of valiant efforts, none of the Dreamcast shooters we've played by Western developers have been able to match the clever design and pacing of their Japanese counterparts. Until now…

Fast Striker is a joyous little shooter from the creators of *Last Hope*. Unlike *Last Hope*, though, this is a shooter that knows what it wants to do and, more importantly, knows how to get it done. The pace is excellent, with well-designed attack formations, interesting bosses and intricate bullet patterns, while the music is immense, effortlessly matching the fast-paced action.

There are alsofour distinct gameplay modes: Novice, Original, Maniac and Otaku, and they all offer their own distinct play styles and bullet patterns to learn. Tech bonuses are awarded for killing the huge bosses piece-by-piece, there are plenty of secrets to uncover, while the score mechanics are solid, changing slightly for each game mode. Visually it has lovely chunky visuals that immediately call to mind previous Neo Geo shooters such as *Pulstar* and *Blazing Star*. The low-res stylings will annoy many, but considering this was originally an MVS game it's to be expected. Add in a truly scintillating soundtrack and, while *Fast Striker* still falls short of the magic of Cave's shooters, it's a very close-run thing. A highly impressive follow-up to *Last Hope* and an essential addition to any Dreamcast shoot-'em-up library.

>> Scores

Presentation	68%
Graphics	80%
Sound	94%
Playability	88%
Addictivity	85%

Overall 87%

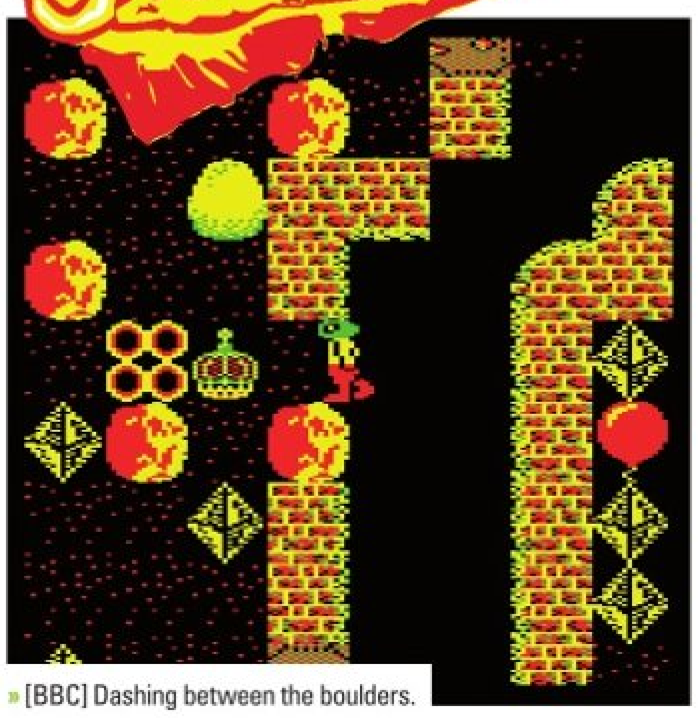


Something readers might not be aware of is the delay between these pages being written and that issue being published. I mention this because readers occasionally inquire why a recent game wasn't covered in the latest issue. Sometimes it's just a matter of space, but usually the reason is that it arrived too close to the deadline for a review to be done!

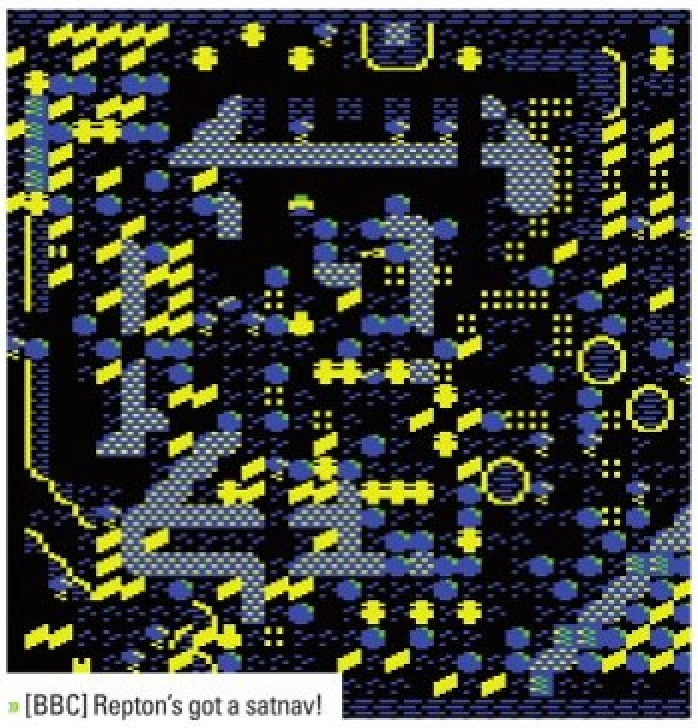
retro GAMER SIZZLER



» [BBC] Wave your arms in the air like you don't care.



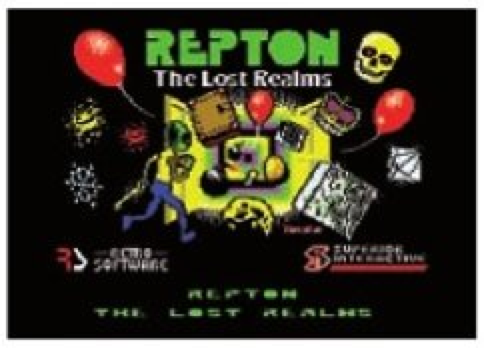
» [BBC] Dashing between the boulders.



» [BBC] Repton's got a satnav!

REPTON: THE LOST REALMS

SAY HELLO TO MY LITTLE FRIEND



» **FORMAT:** BBC MICRO
» **DEVELOPED BY:** PARAS SIDAPARA AND TOM WALKER
» **LINK:** KIKSTART.EU/REPTON-TLR
» **RELEASE DATE:** 2010
» **PRICE:** £6.95 (DISK) PLUS P&P

During the Eighties, schoolboy programmer Paras Sidapara decided that he wanted to write a sequel to a game he'd been enjoying called *Repton 3*. That was nothing unusual, of course – all over the country and the world, young coders were cutting their teeth on sequels to popular franchises, almost always falling at the earlier hurdles while learning valuable lessons about programming along the way. But what made this particular backroom project different is that a complete game was produced, which even expanded on the previous titles, and a disk was duly popped into the post to Superior Software, the publisher of *Repton*. Sadly, it already had a new instalment of the franchise in development, so at this point *Repton 4* could simply have disappeared completely. In fact, it wouldn't be until a BBC Micro mailing list post in 2001 that anybody would even be aware of its existence.

» [BBC] It won't work as a level, will it?



Fast forward to 2007 when BBC specialist Retro Software was just beginning to find its feet and one of the founding members remembered that mailing list post. Although the email address had long since become defunct, Paras Sidapara was located through the magic of the internet and, after a few trials, tribulations and a road trip, a version of the game was assembled from a copy of the code given to a school friend and some backed up levels. Another two years passed but, after some sterling code work from BBC genius Tom Walker and extra levels created by *Repton* fans, including Superior Interactive's Richard Hansen, the newly christened *Repton: The Lost Realms* made its first public appearance on a massive television at R3play 2010.

Along with the extensions to the design previously added by Paras, such as the balloons, which move like boulders but in the opposite direction, and absorbalene pills that allow Repton to remove doors, during the final polishing the authentic-looking graphics were spruced up and a brand new intro picture created. The developers have even supplied a built-in level-editing utility on the disk that allows players to build challenges for each other either by creating their own stages or making alterations to any pre-defined area that they've completed and earned the level select code for.

All great so far, although there's a 'but' coming, which revolves around the difficulty. *Repton: The Lost Realms* really isn't geared towards newcomers to the *Repton* universe, and even seasoned gamers who aren't well-versed in the series are almost certainly going to find themselves struggling within the first couple of levels. *Repton* fans and indeed those determined enough to become *Repton* fans have plenty to keep them coming back, but we do feel that it's something of a shame that there wasn't at least one set of less taxing levels included. There has been a vast amount of effort put into both the program and the level designs by everybody involved, but it's work that more casual players might never see.

91%

NEW GAMES NEEDED

If you have a homebrew project you would like to see featured then please contact us at:
retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk

STAMP QUEST

» **FORMAT:** SPECTRUM » **DEVELOPER:** DAVE HUGHES
» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/STAMP-QUEST » **PRICE:** FREE

They say philately will get you nowhere, but *Stamp Quest* is a brightly coloured romp through ten alien worlds, bringing collector Moebius face to face with all manner of bizarre creatures and Kevin Toms. These fatal enemies each patrol a postage-laden platform either by bouncing back and forth or homing in on the player's position, while Moebius himself can use the teleporters – which sometimes only go down – or move up or down between levels by leaving the screen and going left or right.

This is the programmer's first machine code outing, which, despite the overall simplicity of the game design and a spot of sprite flicker, works surprisingly well; the pace is quick and the difficulty curve is steep enough to be mistaken for a large hill, with each stage offering lots of places for death to occur if concentration is lost. Perseverance is rewarded with an amusing intermission introducing another recently acquired rare stamp. *Stamp Quest* is reasonable but more Mailsort than Penny Black.

70%

» [Spectrum] Penny Black? Never heard of her!





» [C64] The only way is up.

NANAKO IN CLASSIC JAPANESE MONSTER CASTLE

» **FORMAT:** COMMODORE 64 » **DEVELOPER:** INSIDE AND THE MOJON TWINS
» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/NANAKO-C64 » **PRICE:** FREE

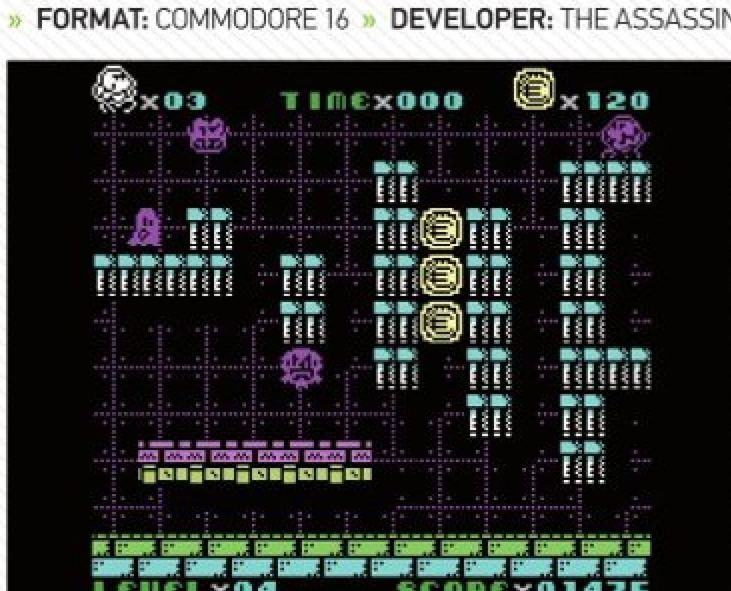
The latest version of *Nanako In Classic Japanese Monster Castle* took a while to arrive, but now C64 owners can quite literally take the Mojon Twins' scantily clad star to new heights. The objective is to scale the castle by any means and, since Nanako can't jump particularly high, she'll instead have to rely on static objects littering the play area, magically picking up and dropping red blocks to make stairways and occasionally balancing on an otherwise fatal monster's noggin to reach her lofty goal.

Generally speaking, *Nanako*'s C64 outing feels just a little more challenging than the previous iterations, and the game logic has been improved; one particular 'feature' that previously allowed the bikini-wearing heroine to cheat her way past the glass ceiling by rapidly grabbing and dropping blocks while jumping has apparently been fixed. Although these changes might lead to just a touch more frustration than before, *Nanako In Classic Japanese Monster Castle* is still a decent test of a player's reflexes and brain power, presented with some solid graphics and music.

84%

UWOL: QUEST FOR MONEY

» **FORMAT:** COMMODORE 16 » **DEVELOPER:** THE ASSASSINS » **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/UWOL-C16 » **PRICE:** FREE



» [C16] Money, money, money.

Oh, look. It's another version of *Uwol: Quest For Money.* We really weren't expecting more of those to appear! The Mojon Twins' rotund character is rapidly becoming the Esperanto of 8- and 16-bit homebrew, and the latest iteration has been squeezed into the unexpanded Commodore 16, taking visual cues from the Spectrum to the point of including a little colour clash.

Regular readers will no doubt know the story backwards by now: Uwol wants to emulate his various platform game heroes by entering the ominous-sounding Storm Palace, grabbing as much loot as he can and getting out before the surreal disembodied heads and spectres of the security system nab him.

The playability is still here, the graphics are reasonably colourful, and the only element lost in cramming the game into a measly 16K of memory is the soundtrack.

85%

WHAT'S BREWING?

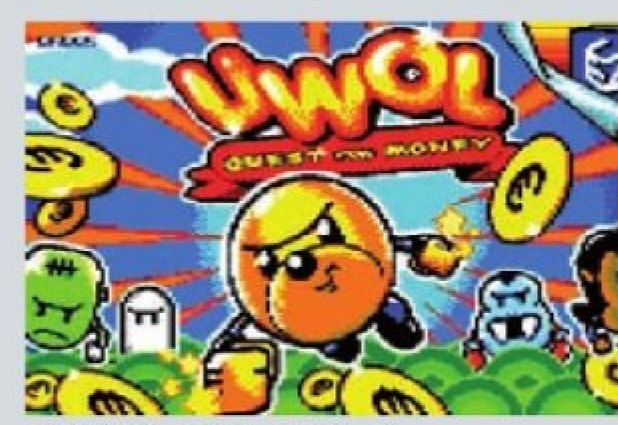
All the latest news from the homebrew community



» [Atari 8-bit] M is for maze.

>> Brought To You By The Letter M

Project M is a brave and impressive go at pushing a *Wolfenstein 3D* game through the Atari 8-bit. While a couple of Atarians are already hailing it as the Second Coming, the playable preview doing the rounds is more of a 3D maze exploration along the lines of *Way Out.* The developer is hoping that adding enemies and violence won't slow things down to intolerable levels.



» [CPC] Trying to find cash in the attic.

>> The Quest Begins (Again)

There's more news about the Mojon Twins' ongoing attempt to take over the world with multiple versions of *Uwol*: an Amstrad CPC version is well into production and looking solid. It does leave us wondering where the game will appear next, since noises of an Atari 8-bit port are being made… and what happens when critical mass is reached? Further reading and screenshots can be found at **kikstart.eu/uwol-cpc**



» [CPC] Come into the garden, babe.

>> And The Quest Continues!

And sticking with *Uwol*, we come to the sequel, which, just to confuse us, has been released first on the Amstrad CPC before the conversion of the original is completed. The action this time is in the gardens of the Storm Palace and Uwol, now penniless after a run-in with a phantom and a tumble, must choose to explore and gather cash or simply escape. **kikstart.eu/uwol2-cpc**

HOMEBREW

>> The scene's latest news and reviews

WHAT'S BREWING?

All the latest news from the homebrew community



>> Up The Arsenal

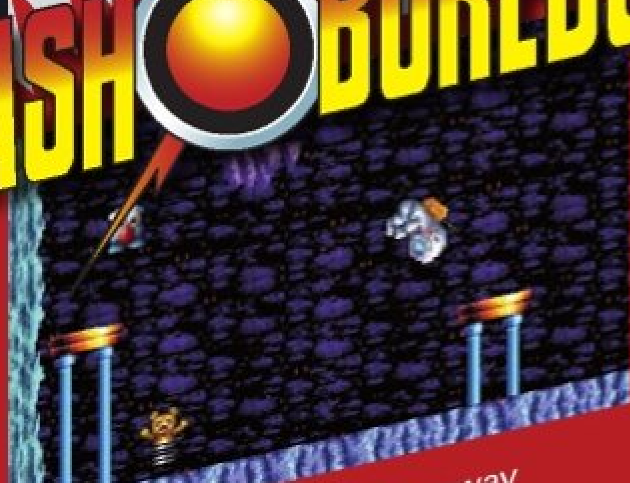
Although it doesn't appear to be complete judging by the version we've seen, a playable version of Nintendo DS 2D shoot-'em-up *Arsenal* was recently released during the last NintendoMax DS Dev competition. There only appears to be one actual level available at the moment accompanied by a couple of half-completed tests, and the player's collision detection seems very unforgiving considering how enthusiastic the enemy's gunners are, so there's quite a way to go before it's finished. Eager DS gamers can give the preview at **kikstart.eu/arsenal** a try.



>> Why The Hurry?

And keeping with the shooting theme, those lovely chaps at Xona Games have been busy again. After *Decimation X3*, they released Score Rush, another Xbox Live Indie title that offers up to four-player simultaneous blasting action and scores of brightly coloured, trigger-happy enemies to chip away at and destroy. The price tag has been set at just 80 Microsoft Points and **kikstart.eu/score-rush** will take you to **further information.**

FLASH OF BOREDOM



Want to know how to while away those boring office hours? Then don't miss out on **Retro Gamer**'s Flash game of the month. This month we look at **Nodes Of Yesod.**

THIS IS A Flash version of the 8-bit platform adventure of the same name, developed by one of the original programming team. Astro Charlie's monolithic mission to the moon can either be attempted with Spectrum or enhanced graphics, and a map screen has been added to make navigating easier. Play it at **kikstart.eu/yesod**

REMAKES WE'VE BEEN PLAYING. . .



Remake of the Month



STAR CASTLE

» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/STAR-CASTLE



The plot behind *Star Castle* is pretty much just a cliché: the player is their planet's last hope, sent on a potentially one-way mission to defeat a well-defended enemy stronghold. The threat this time is a space-based cannon with three lines of defence: it lobs out slow-moving but hard to shoot heat-seeking mines, has three layers of shielding that can be chipped away by a couple of shots and… well, it's a cannon, so if it's aiming at the player and the fast-moving projectile has a clear route through holes in the shielding, it will take the shot.

The original Cinematronics release of *Star Castle* was vector-based, and that look has been built on for Sokurah's remake, along with the option to disable the colours and background image. The original's high difficulty level has also been maintained, so any players unfamiliar with the coin-op – and possibly a few who are – will find this to be a challenge that requires a little practice before they even clear the first level; getting used to utilising the wrapping around of the play area is a must, and an itchy trigger finger isn't going to go amiss either. *Star Castle* won't suit those who don't enjoy the tougher end of the shoot-'em-up scale, but more persistent players who get into it can send their scores to the website for the online leaderboard.



LAWNMOWER VS ZOMBIES

» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/MOWER



Lawnmower vs Zombies could be an experiment to meld the genes of classic Jeff Minter mow-'em-up *Hover Bovver* with a zombie invasion. With the undead hordes coming, it's apparently important that they'll be able to shamble across a neatly cut lawn! If enough of the grass isn't cut within the time limit or a zombie catches the mower while it reverses, the game is over.

The zombie gimmick has already worn translucent and the only variety here is to add more living dead and change the layout, but tearing up animated corpses with a rotary mower and occasionally watching one stumble onto a mine can at least be amusing.



NINJA SENKI

» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/NINJA-SENKI



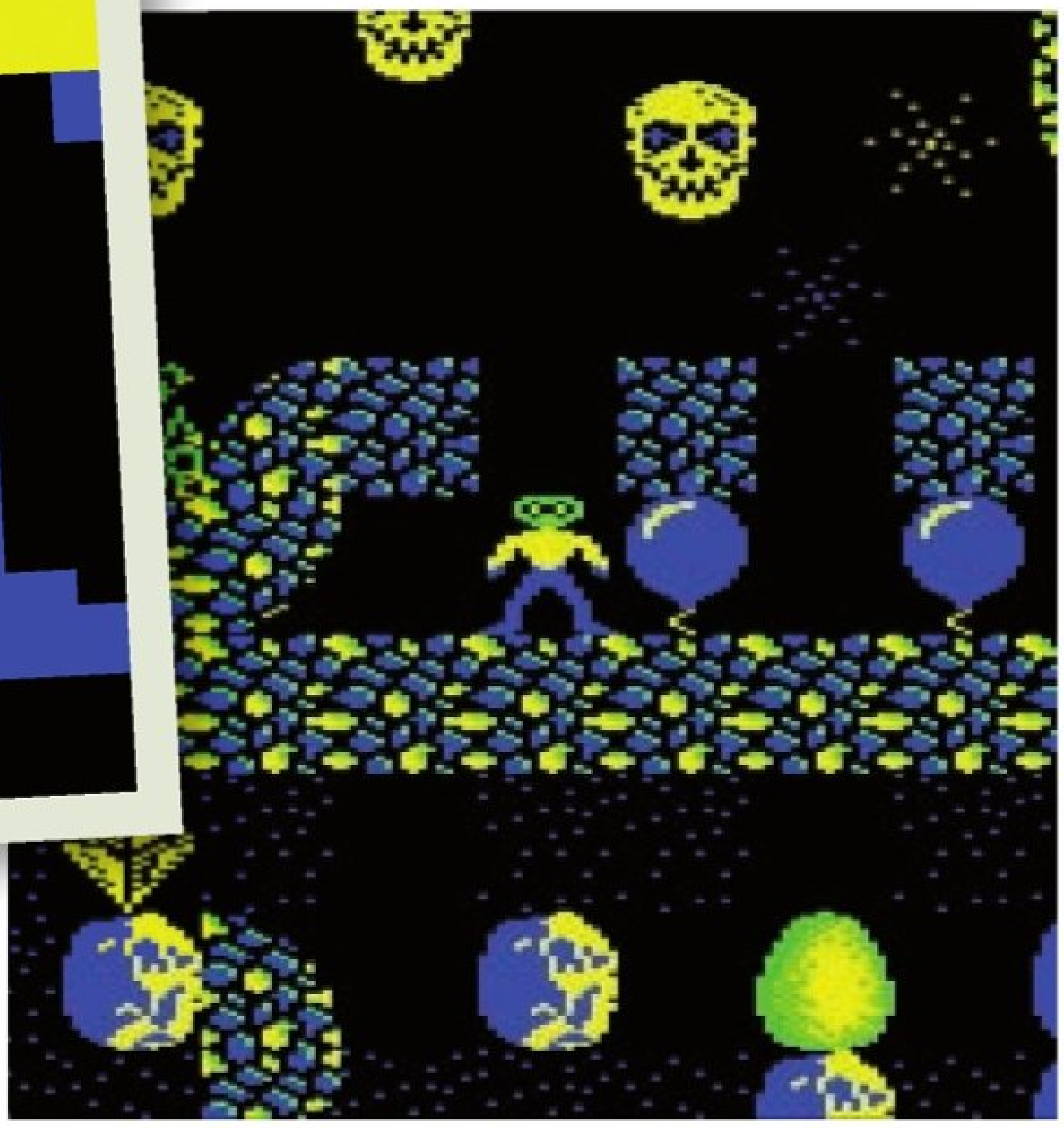
Hayate's sweetheart Kinuhime has been murdered by a ninja demon in the opening cut-scene, so now he's out for revenge. Since he's also a ninja, that revenge involves running around, using his mystical ninja double jumping power to reach higher platforms, and using throwing stars on the assorted minions. Who knows? There might even be a way to resurrect Kinuhime.

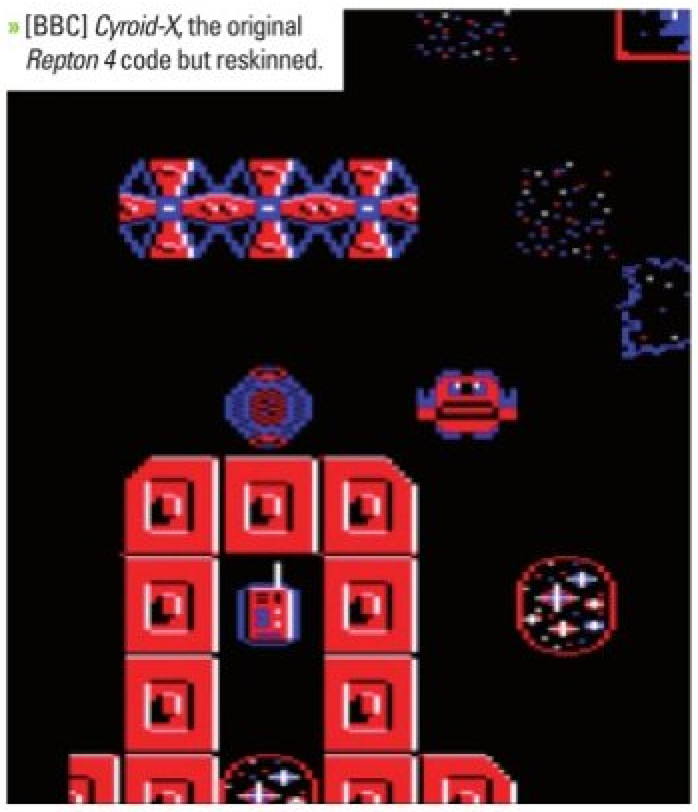
A few tries to settle on a control setup that works for simultaneously jumping and firing and a little practice are needed before Hayate's mission begins proper. Since the inspirations for *Ninja Senki* are games like *Mega Man* and *Ninja Gaiden*, the graphics and sound are very much NES-based, and Hayate's mission is going to be very difficult indeed.



HOMEBREW HEROES

WE'VE BEEN TAKING A LOOK AT RETRO SOFTWARE'S LATEST RELEASE, REPTON: THE LOST REALMS, THIS ISSUE, AND IT WAS ONLY LOGICAL TO ASK THE ORIGINAL DEVELOPER A COUPLE OF QUESTIONS. THAT WOULD BE **PARAS SIDAPARA**, WHO WAS HAPPY TO TALK!





» [BBC] *Cyroid-X*, the original *Repton 4* code but reskinned.

Q&A

Retro Gamer: So how did you initially get into programming the BBC Micro?
Paras Sidapara: I started programming in Logo on the Apple II at school when I was eight as the first computer we had, and then the headmaster – Chris Evans, RIP – brought in all sorts of things for us to play with including Ataris, the obligatory Research Machines, a Tatung Einstein, a Tandy TRS-80 and Beebs, of course. I asked my dad to buy me a computer but he refused to get me a C64 or Speccy because he wanted something 'educational' for me, so got me a Beeb. I was then hooked at home – I'd code at night on school nights!



» [BBC] The tools of the trade.

But I wasn't into games – I wrote a Logo interpreter that did a software sprites implementation, inspired by Atari Logo, which you could write arcade games in, and the Logotron Logo Sprite Board for the BBC. We sold that as Parasoft Logo & Sprites in conjunction with the school – did pretty well off the back of a small write-up in *Acorn User*. Programming was my passion, not playing games – well, I say that, but *Chuckie Egg*, *Frak!* and *Revs* took up many a lunchtime!

RG: And what about *Repton* in particular inspired you to attempt *Repton 4*?
PS: I guess I liked puzzles, which tied in with my love of maths at that age too. I spent some of the money from the Logo venture to buy *Repton Around The World In 40 Screens* – it just looked great in the cover ads on the magazines! I hardly played it, though. I figured I could go one better… hence *Repton 4*!

RG: Did you expect the level of interest around *Repton: The Lost Realms* all these years later?

HIGH FIVE

The classic games that Paras can't live without

1 Chuckie Egg (BBC Micro) Pure, simple gameplay and progressive difficulty made this great!

2 Frak! (BBC Micro) An electronic comedy show! It was frustrating at times, and at times just plain silly!

3 Exile (BBC Micro) A technical feast! I played it just to see how many different things they'd managed to cram in. It was wonderful!

4 Doom (PC) Weirdly satisfying to kill your friends. I wish I had a BFG 9000 at work sometimes!

5 Angry Birds (iOS) So 8-bit in its approach. Pure gameplay!

PS: Apparently some random post on a board somewhere was spotted by Dave Moore of Stairway To Hell and now Retro Software. I think he spent seven years trying to track me down and finally he did. Completely unexpected, but very warming to have the idea of a release, even if it didn't fund my childhood Ferrari dream.

RG: You're still heavily involved with computers and technology. Would it be fair to say the BBC Micro started you on your current path?
PS: No doubt about it. Programming in assembler on a machine with 32K RAM gets you thinking at a level that you just don't touch with high-level languages, and you have to worry about everything, particularly timing and memory usage. I don't code any more, but what I do now is deliver IT that fundamentally is trying to do the same thing: squeeze every ounce of efficiency out of computing platforms!

RG: And finally, what advice can you give to any would-be 8-bit developers who might be reading?
PS: 8-bit? Go for it! It's a wonderful way to really appreciate what a computer is all about. And do something on the BBC Micro. Not only is it so easy to achieve things on, be it the real thing off eBay or on an emulator, but help contribute to making it live on, because there will never be another computer with a row of red keys again!

MAILBAG

HAVE YOUR SAY… SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON THE ONLINE FORUM – **WWW.RETROGAMER.NET**

STAR LETTER

TO BE THIS GOOD TAKES NINTENDO



Dear Retro Gamer,

Just wanted to say how excited I am about the 3DS. There appears to be a lot of negative press since it was revealed, more so since the announcement of Sony's PSP2, but I simply don't care. I have to have one, and I'm chuffed that it's already looking like a haven for retro franchises.

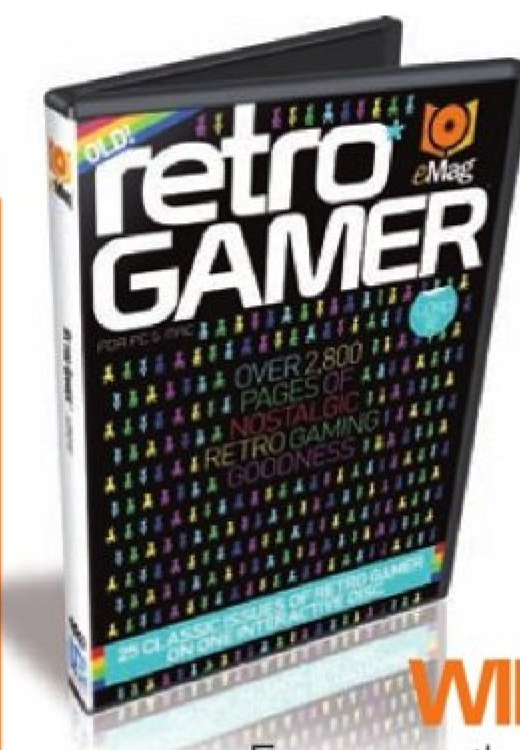
While some have already claimed that they have no interest in yet another iteration of *Star Fox 64* and *The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Time*, for me it couldn't be more different. These games are shining examples of not only Nintendo's craftsmanship, but they also happen to be considered some of the greatest examples of their genres. Who wouldn't want to replay them in snazzy new 3D?

Don't get me wrong, I can totally understand why there is animosity towards the machine, but as a retro gamer, I'm incredibly excited. A new *Kid Icarus* game, more *Resident Evil*, more *Metal Gear Solid*, a re-imagining of *Rayman 2*, *Bust-A-Move*, *Bomberman*, *Dead Or Alive*, *Harvest Moon*, *Street Fighter IV*, *Mario Kart*… The list of classic franchises just seems to go on and on and on.

By far the most exciting news for me, though, and the game that will be a launch day purchase, is the fantastic revelation that none other than Julian Gollop has developed the new *Ghost Recon* game. If that's not a recommendation that a new strategy game will be good, I don't know what is.

Yours excitedly,
Steven Webb

The 3DS does appear to be getting a lot of flak lately, which is a shame as we're massively excited about it. While the argument that many of the games have already been released on past systems is valid, they are nonetheless fantastic games. Judging by Stuart's first-hand play of *Ocarina Of Time*, it's shaping up incredibly well and the 3D adds immeasurably to the overall experience. We're also excited about Julian's new game and will be reviewing it in a future issue.



WIN!

Every month, one lucky reader will receive a copy of our latest eMag, **Retro Gamer Load 2**, a bargain if ever there was one. All you have to do is present a lucid, thought-provoking piece of literature that melts our souls. Failing that, something funny with swear words, or something *Strider*-related will go down just as well…

NO MORE LAST GEN

Dear Retro Gamer,

I'm a big fan of the magazine and I have been with you for a while now. However, I don't really agree with having last-gen games for PS2, Xbox and GameCube in the magazine. It's not a wise move and you'll start to lose your audience if you continue. I don't want to be reminded of games from ten years ago when I was 25! I would prefer old-school pixels that remind me of my youth. Ten years ago is not retro for many of us. I don't think playing to a younger audience will help you out either. Your magazine has been successful because the older gamers are drawn in due to the nostalgia fix it offers. Targeting younger gamers will only distance your fan base and without them you'll run into trouble. Please consider my request not to include last gen. Your fans have got you this far; trust us to take you the rest of the way.

From down under, Australia

Well, first off, congratulations for not doing a Matthew Lightbourne – as we like to call it – and simply giving us a torrent of abuse in order to get your point across. The Future Classic isn't about reminding you of games from ten years ago, but it's more about telling you why these titles will still be played in years to come. It's a minor difference, admittedly, but a rather significant point and one we feel justifies its continued coverage within the magazine. As we've pointed out in the past, unless there's a sudden increase in readers asking for certain features, this coverage will never increase beyond two pages an issue.



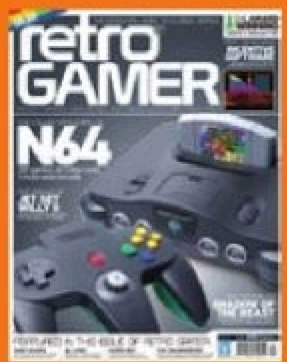
» [GameCube] From down under isn't too keen on Future Classics. Does anyone else think it doesn't deserve to be in the magazine?

OUTRAGEOUS FORTUNES

Hi Retro Gamer,

I work in a games store and was last week accused of being a liar when a customer popped in with a ZX Spectrum he wanted to sell. We were not willing to take it off him, as we don't buy old machines, but as I collect them I said I'd be willing to buy it from him and asked how much he would like for it. He said he wasn't too sure, but it would have to be thousands of pounds.

When I politely informed him that an unboxed ZX Spectrum was actually worth nearer £20 he went mad and accused me of being a liar. It turned out that *The Sun* newspaper had printed a small article about how things in the attic could be worth money. The final line of the article read: "Old-school computers such as Spectrums



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YOUTUBE UPDATE

DARRAN'S BEEN GETTING back into his shmups lately, thanks to the Xbox 360, Fast Striker and the Sega Saturn, so if you like shooting goodness you need to head on over to the usual address and have your eyes blinded by bullet patterns.

www.youtube.com/user/RetroGamerDaz

could be worth up to £135,000", and he had read this article and believed his unboxed ZX Spectrum to be worth thousands. He showed me the article, accusing me of being a liar, and then stormed out of the shop, furious that I was trying to rip him off. I suspect he wasn't the only person in the country thinking they had struck it rich after reading it in *The Sun*. The exact article was in the newspaper on 28 December. I have it here if you'd like to see it.

All the best,

Stephen Atherton



Funnily enough, we also saw the article and did notice that there were more old systems on eBay than normal in the weeks after the article. We felt particularly sorry for one individual whose "super rare" Amstrad CPC with green-screen monitor didn't actually sell. Still, it just goes to show the power of the mainstream press.

NAME THAT GAME

Dear Retro Gamer,

Please, please, please could you help me by supplying information about the following game that I used to enjoy playing. It was a space trading game where you built spaceships – heads and grabbers were two of the parts you could buy – and were visited by various aliens who had parts to trade. You then battled other players. I can't remember the name of it for the life of me. Please can you put me out of my misery and tell me what it is?

Dave Christoffersen

We're really sorry, Dave, but as much as we racked our brains we have no idea what the game you're talking about is. Hopefully one of our more learned readers will be able to solve the mystery.

MORA OBSCURA

Dear Retro Gamer

I have been reading your magazine since the first issue and I must say thank you and about time too for the coverage of the Tatung Einstein.

It is really good to see coverage of machines that were not as popular back in the day, although more depth would have been appreciated. With this in mind, will there be any coverage in future of other obscure and less popular machines like the TI-99, Sharp MZ-700, CGL Sord M5, Mattel Aquarius, Jupiter ACE and Acetronic?

Paul Staniforth, via email

Glad to hear you enjoyed the article on the Tatung Einstein, Paul. Obscura Machina has proven to be incredibly popular since we started it, so you can rest assured that we will continue to feature it in future issues. We also have a brand new feature this month that's more focused on the collecting side of classic machines, albeit >>

> "The Sun claimed that Spectrums could be worth up to £135,000"

RETROBATE PROFILE



Name:	Ben Tryie
Joined:	11 February 2010
Location:	North Wales
Occupation:	Student
Website:	gigspepsiman.blogspot.com
Fave Games System:	GameCube



>> Paul Staniforth is just one of the many readers who enjoys the new Obscura Machina feature.

BEAT THE TEAM

Think you're good at retro games? See if you can beat the staff at some of their favourite titles



High Score: 225,250



DARRAN

CHOSEN GAME: P-47: THE FREEDOM FIGHTER

Why I picked it: It's not the greatest shmup, but I'm good at it and adore the sunset on the second level. **Handy tip:** Picking up the same power-up greatly increases its firepower. Go for the bombs and spread missiles.



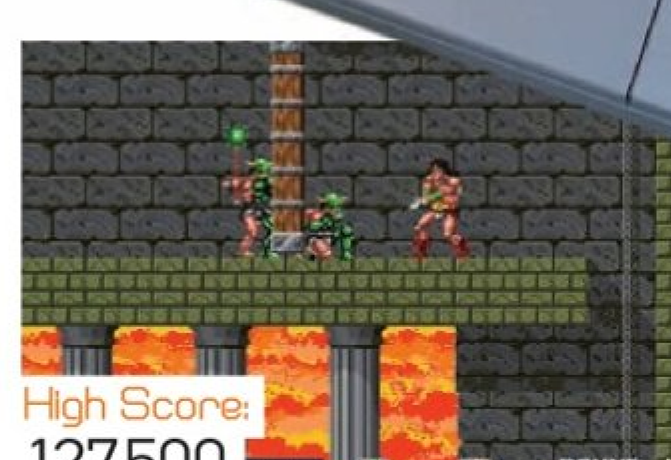
High Score: 102,800



STUART

CHOSEN GAME: SIDE ARMS HYPER DYNE

Why I picked it: Because it's a great little shooter with some interesting ideas. **Handy tip:** Enemies come at you from both sides, so don't fall prey to hanging on the left. Playing the game with a mate also makes things much easier.



High Score: 127,500



DAVID

CHOSEN GAME: RASTAN

Why I picked it: I was feeling hard and adventurous. Okay? **Handy tip:** It sounds silly, but you really need to hit first and ask questions later. Let enemies gang up and you won't stand a chance.

From the forum

» To have your say visit www.retrogamer.net/forum

Every month, **Retro Gamer** asks a question on the forum and prints the best replies. This month we wanted to know…

What's your favourite N64 game?

SirClive *Blast Corps* is pretty much the only N64 game that I care about. I find the machine to be massively overrated, but that game is all kinds of aces.

jdanddiet I'm going to be startlingly unoriginal and say *GoldenEye*…

Roo *Banjo-Kazooie*. The immediately intuitive controls and impossibly catchy soundtrack, coupled with the genius level design and the sheer vastness of the game – 50 hours for my first playthrough – makes it one wholly impressive package that I simply can't look past. Rare's talent at its absolute peak. Nigh-on faultless!

Mayhem Branching away from the likely usual suspects, I'm going to say *Snowboard Kids*. While technically *Mario Kart* on boards, it was better than the iteration on the N64, with a multiplayer only rivalled by *GoldenEye*, and the flexibility to be as ruthless as you wanted.

Timothy Lumsden Oddly, it's *Pokémon Snap*. And I'm not even a *Pokémon* fan. Just a nice little title.

Jet Pilot Forgive me for being boring, but I have to go with both *Super Mario 64* and *Mario Kart 64*.

thevulture *Perfect Dark*. Friends and I bought the console just for this. It asked more than the system could deliver at times but just superb.

Cauterize A controversial choice, but *Magical Tetris Challenge*. There is no other *Tetris* game as bizarre or entertaining, especially when it justifies a 5x5 block dropping down into play.

RalphMilne's Left Foot *WWF No Mercy*. One of the best wrestling games ever.

Limbrooke I never owned an N64 and never had any desire to own one either. The controller I thought was radical, coming from a Genesis, and as a result hard to adjust to. This is what led to me having a fond dislike of the system. I agree with sentiments that it does have a certain juvenile attitude but the first game for me that truly differed was *Sin & Punishment*. An assault on the senses, which represents Treasure at its best.

Morkin Might be a strange choice, but probably *Diddy Kong Racing*. I was a bit late to the N64 party so didn't really spend much time with the console, although I remember spending hours on *DKR*.

nakamura *Wave Race*. Lovely twee atmosphere hides a supremely playable racer with amazing water physics and great tracks.

lanky316 *Superman 64*. It stands as the symbol for the N64 to me retrospectively. So many games with potentially good ideas gone to waste.

Liamh1982 *ISS 2000*. The career mode was a work of bizarre genius. Just annoying that the choice of nationalities was pretty small. I am currently posting wearing a Wales home shirt.

Dunjohn I forget the name. It involved an elf boy in a green hat and a princess and a horse and a music thing.

Mire Mare *Sin & Punishment*. I bought an NTSC N64 from Hong Kong to get my hands on this game and it didn't disappoint.

joefish It's a completely unoriginal thing to say, but *The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Time* was and still is an epic combination of game and story.

The console historically took Mario into 3D, then beat him at his own kart-racing genre with *Diddy Kong Racing*. It also gave us some amazing multiplayer experiences, but it was taking *Zelda* into 3D, then having Link actually grow up in-game, that'll always be remembered by gamers the world over.

Deadpan666 *Body Harvest*. All right, so it was slow and clunky, but the idea was sound! I really want Rockstar to do a sequel to this! *GTA* meets *Earth Defence Force*!

davekam So many great games. I probably spent the most time on *GoldenEye*, but I think my favourite was *Pilotwings 64*. *Blast Corps* was great fun as well.

Baki Being a huge Treasure fan, I have to go for *Sin & Punishment*, but I also liked *Bangai-O* a lot!

TheDude18 *Mario 64*. One in the eye for the 'Nintendo only rehashes its old IPs' crowd. A seamless jump from 2D to 3D platforming.

thompson9980 *Turok*, because it looked great and the music was ace.

YOUR OPINION PLEASE

BUTTON MASHERS

Negative Creep I really need to get this off my chest. Why do game makers insist on including it in their games? At least on games such as *Track & Field* all the events were button mashers, so you could avoid the game if you didn't like it. But why do developers insist on putting them in?

snowkatt I dislike QTEs more than button mashers because developers tend to overuse them and seem to think they substitute for gameplay

StickHead I found the 'hammer X to open the grates' in *Arkham Asylum* quite annoying. You just have to do it so often.

TheSpeedOfSex What a disaster. I'm reading through this entire post and you're all describing rapid fire. A button masher is a person who randomly mashes buttons.

BORING GAMES

TwoHeadedBoy What's the most boring game you've ever played? Not as in 'This is rubbish', but as in so boring that you've nodded off, or not noticed that you're playing a game?

sirclive1 *Transylvanian Tower* on the ZX Spectrum. Talk about boring. Nothing of any note really happens, the screen takes ages to change/update, and when it does, it's almost identical or completely identical, and then you press the key to move on again, and again.

thl *Transbot* for the Master System. It feels like I'm playing the same stage over and over again.

moshboy Capcom's original arcade beat-'em-up, *Dynasty Wars*, was pretty dull. Just lots and lots of tedious, repetitive levels with repetitive enemies to mow down with very few moves.

BEST HARVEST MOON

Mr Vengeance I used to be a big old fan of the *Harvest Moon* games back in the day but got a little bit overwhelmed with the number that came out a few years ago. Which is the best one for me to play now? Particularly on a handheld.

Roo I say the GBC version is the best. It stripped out all that relationship-building nonsense from the SNES original, thus offering a far more focused, not to mention relevant, *Harvest Moon* experience.

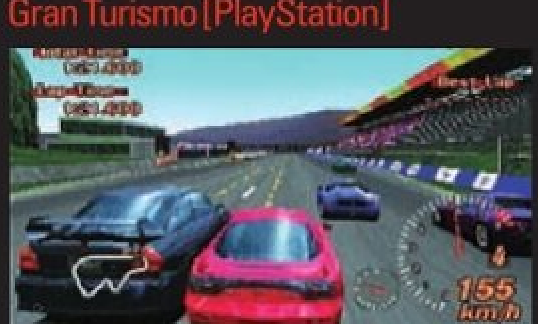
Expervert For me it's the SNES original. Sure, newer *Harvest Moon* games have a lot more features, but the first one was just simple but fun.

NonShinyGoose *Harvest Moon DS* doesn't play that much different to *Friends Of Mineral Town* and is a bit glitchy. One character speaks in German because they forgot to translate it!

OLD vs NEW

Each month, we'll be finding out if the classics are better than their successors. This month, which Gran Turismo is the best?

Gran Turismo [PlayStation]



Gran Turismo 5 [PlayStation 3]



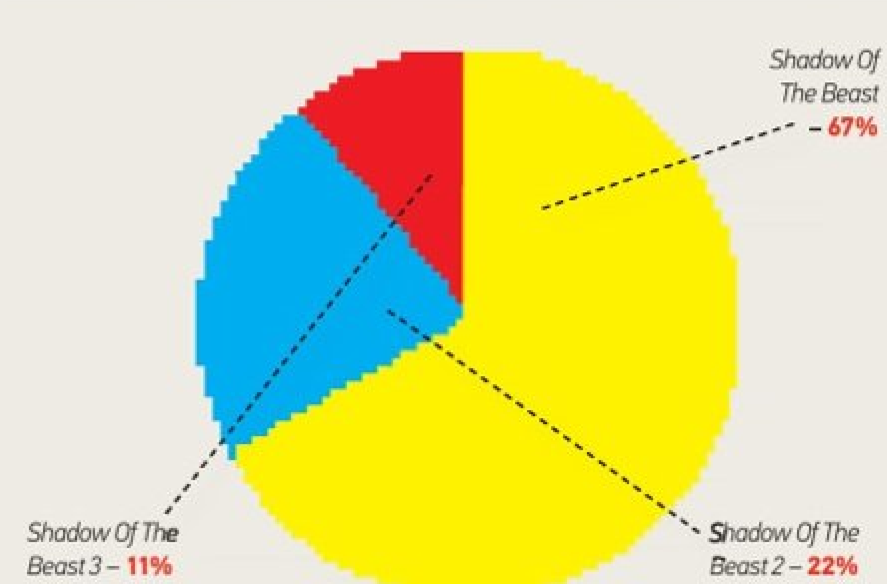
57% | 43%

stvd The original was stunning when it appeared and the depth was overwhelming

Limbrooke No contest. More cars, more realism, and more options all lend favour to *GT5*

HOT TOPIC

Best Shadow Of The Beast game



"The first. Simply inspired graphics and sound, enjoyable as long as you had every cheat available active, and still looks stunning today" **– ncf1**

"I've gone for the first, purely because it was one of the first games I played on the Amiga and the quality of the parallax scrolling simply blew me away" **– bsg**

not quite so obscure. We look forward to hearing feedback on the forum.

LAST OF THE RETRO GAMERS

Dear Retro Gamer,

First off, I would like to congratulate you on a wonderful magazine. I have been with you since the first issue and now subscribe.

I am 35 years old, and like many of your readers have been a fan of videogames since the very beginning. I was a C64 owner and went on to own many consoles before becoming an Amiga fanboy through and through. Anyway, as I was reading this month's copy of **Retro Gamer**, a sad thought occurred to me: our generation will probably be the last to fully appreciate and understand true retro gaming. And by 'true' I mean that we were actually there in the beginning. From our first 8-bit micro or copy of *Zzap!*, to a day at the arcade and drooling at the idea of 'arcade perfect graphics', as promised in every review of every big name conversion. We were very fortunate to be born at a time when the industry was still in its infancy, and as it grew we got swept along with it on a fantastic journey of discovery. But the truth of the matter is that a day will come when those of us who have travelled this path will be gone. Many will come after us and I am sure they will continue to take an interest in the history of gaming, but they won't have lived what we have lived. We are the lucky few and so for us the rose-tinted nostalgia rings the truest. And like the old soldier who tells us tales of the war, we nod and agree but we will never truly understand. But I guess the moral of this story is that while I am sad this is the case, I also feel incredibly privileged to have been a part of something so wonderful, and because of **Retro Gamer** I am reminded every month that I am not alone. Shine on, **Retro Gamer**, you crazy pixelated diamond.

Steve Erickson

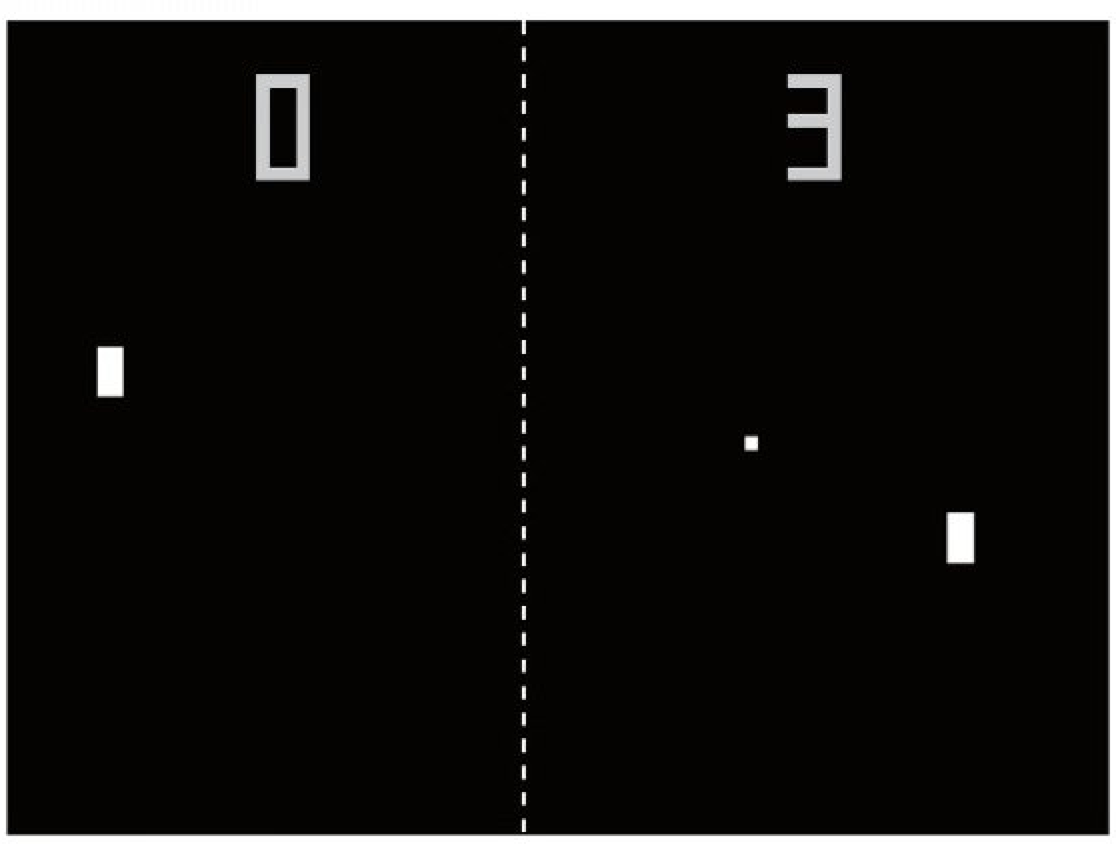
> "We are the lucky few and so for us the rose-tinted nostalgia rings the truest"

DISCUSSED THIS MONTH

Issue 100

It's still a year away, but Darran and Stuart have already been beavering away on ideas for issue 100 and what they'd like to see in the magazine. Steve's been uncharacteristically quiet during these meetings, probably because he's worrying about having to potentially design 100 different covers to celebrate.

Your tale brought a tear to our eyes. It's a sad truth, and one that we're already experiencing whenever we read reviews online and in other magazines. It's like the current generation has little to no knowledge of gaming history and as a result everyone is being led to believe that gaming has never been so good. While there are some fantastic games around today, it's important that we don't forget the games that allowed us to get here.



» One day, we're betting that some gamers won't even know what *Pong* is. That makes us very sad.

NO NEWS IS GOOD NEWS

Dear Retro Gamer,

Back To The Eighties and Nineties are excellent, but the news section can be improved. I don't like hearing about the disasters from that era; there's enough crap in the news. It would be a great idea to focus on movies of the era and celebrities, events, concerts, bands, etc. Just an idea.

The Fan

We'll keep that in mind, but most news stories seem more interested in tragedy than human achievement.

CURRENTLY PLAYING





DARRAN

Mass Effect 2

After reading reviews about its cinematic narrative, groundbreaking gameplay and the hard-hitting choices you were forced to make, I jumped into the PS3 version of BioWare's hit. 14 hours in and I still don't get it.





STUART

Irem Arcade Hits

I have a copy of *Irem Arcade Hits* on my desktop and so have been working my way through most of the games during lunchtimes. The excellent *R-Type Leo* and *Ninja Spirit* have been getting the most play.





DAVID

Blur

It's such a shame that this racing game didn't do as well as it should have. As with many Bizarre Creations games, it's innovative, feature-packed and loads of fun. Goodbye, Bizarre Creations. You will be missed.

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nextmonth

» LOAD 88

ON SALE 31 MARCH 2011

The creators of the Road Rash franchise discuss its 16-bit beginnings and its eventual demise



ALSO IN THE NEXT ISSUE



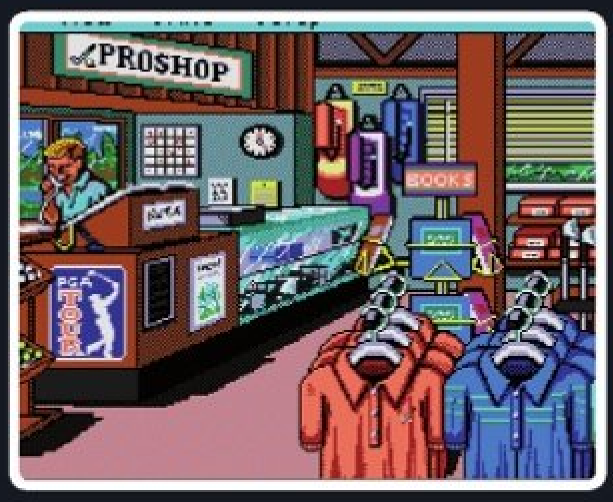
Missile Command

■ We take a look at one of Atari's most popular arcade games and interview record holder Tony Temple.



Firebird

■ Richard Hewison lifts the lid on one of the UK's most prolific 8-bit developers and reveals where it went wrong.



PGA Tour Golf

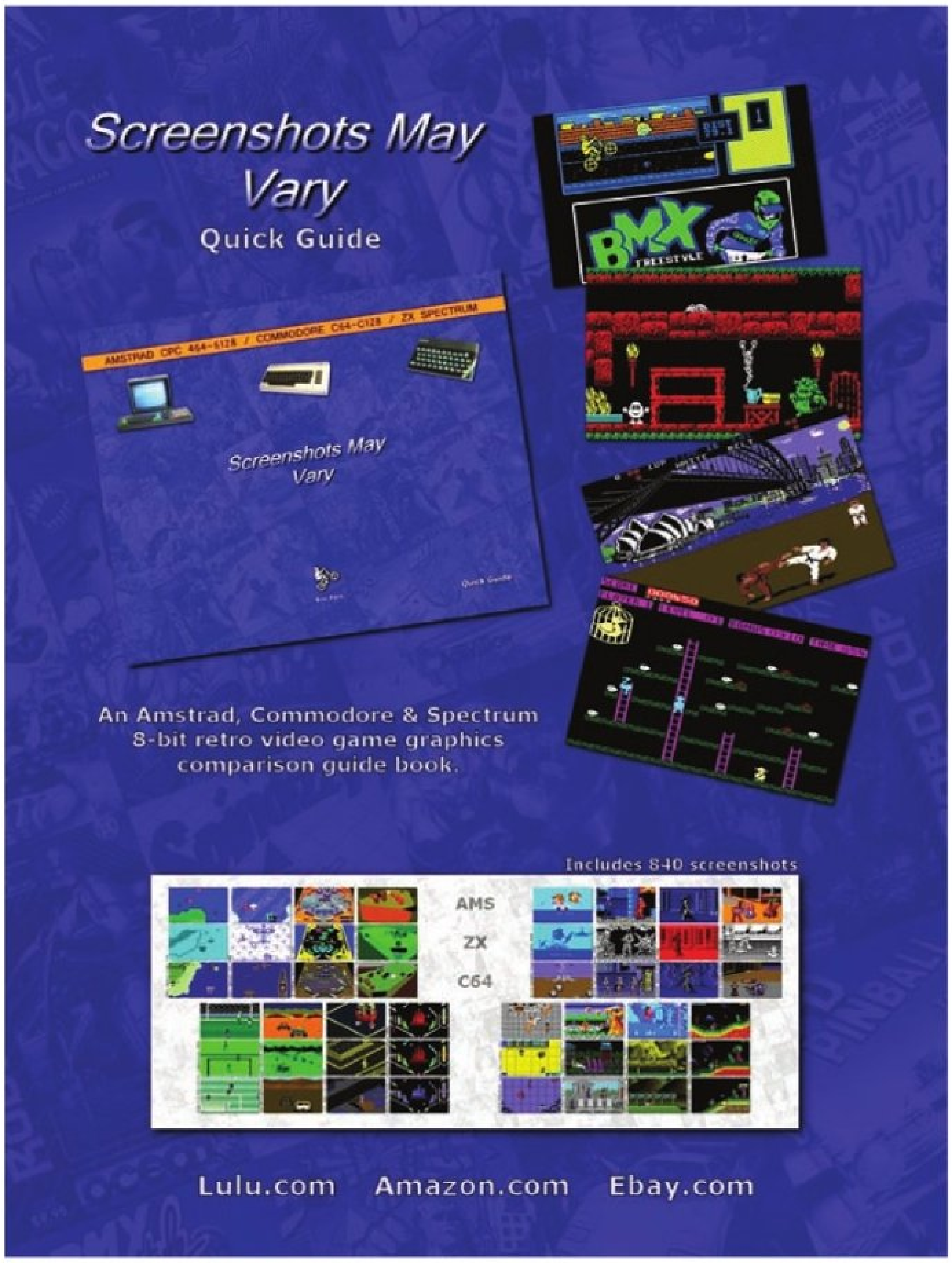
■ As Electronic Arts releases the latest yearly update of its sports game, we take a look at the original Mega Drive hit.



Devil May Cry 3

■ More Future Classics, as we explain why there's unlikely to be a better *Devil May Cry* game than its third installment.


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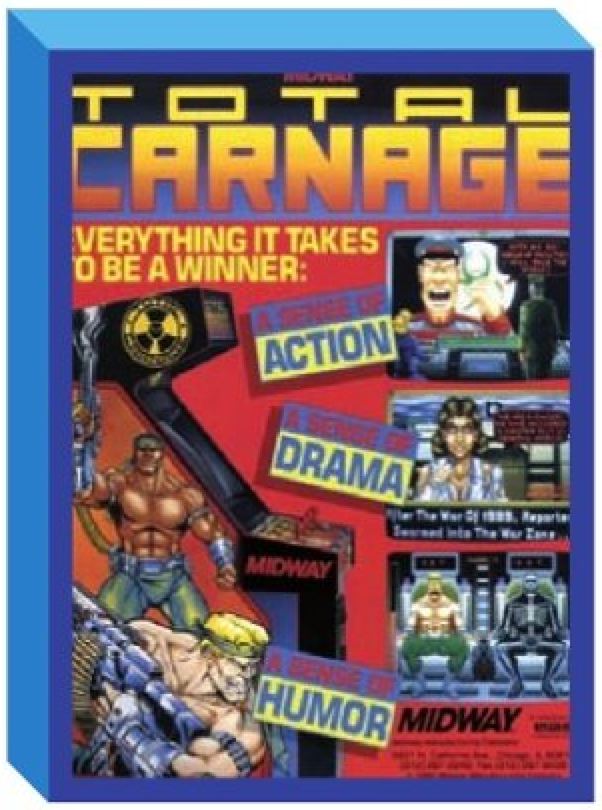
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ENDGAME



TOTAL CARNAGE

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01

» After notching up a kill count that would put *The Expendables* to shame, Captain Carnage and Major Mayhem meet their nemesis, only to discover that he's disguised as M Bison. He's disposed of before Capcom can call its lawyers.



02

» General Akhboob's next trick is to turn into… Adolf Hitler, obviously. As he's easily defeated – he's just a head, after all – the doomed dictator swears vengeance and starts working on an armoured mech suit for *Wolfenstein 3D*.



03

» General Akhboob's last form is one that looks suspiciously like the Terminator. It's a bold move but once again proves to be his undoing as he forgets to morph into something that actually has legs and can run away. Silly General Akhboob.



04

» After filling the general with lead, Captain Carnage and Major Mayhem consider their options. Knowing that Kurt Russell, Sylvester Stallone, Mel Gibson and Danny Glover have the action buddy genre sewn up, they hang up their guns and retire.



05

» Turning their backs on warfare, they enter the Pleasure Dome and meet the heroes of *Smash TV*. After becoming bored with tales of 'big money' and 'big prizes', they kill their dome mates and run off with the women, never to be heard from again.


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